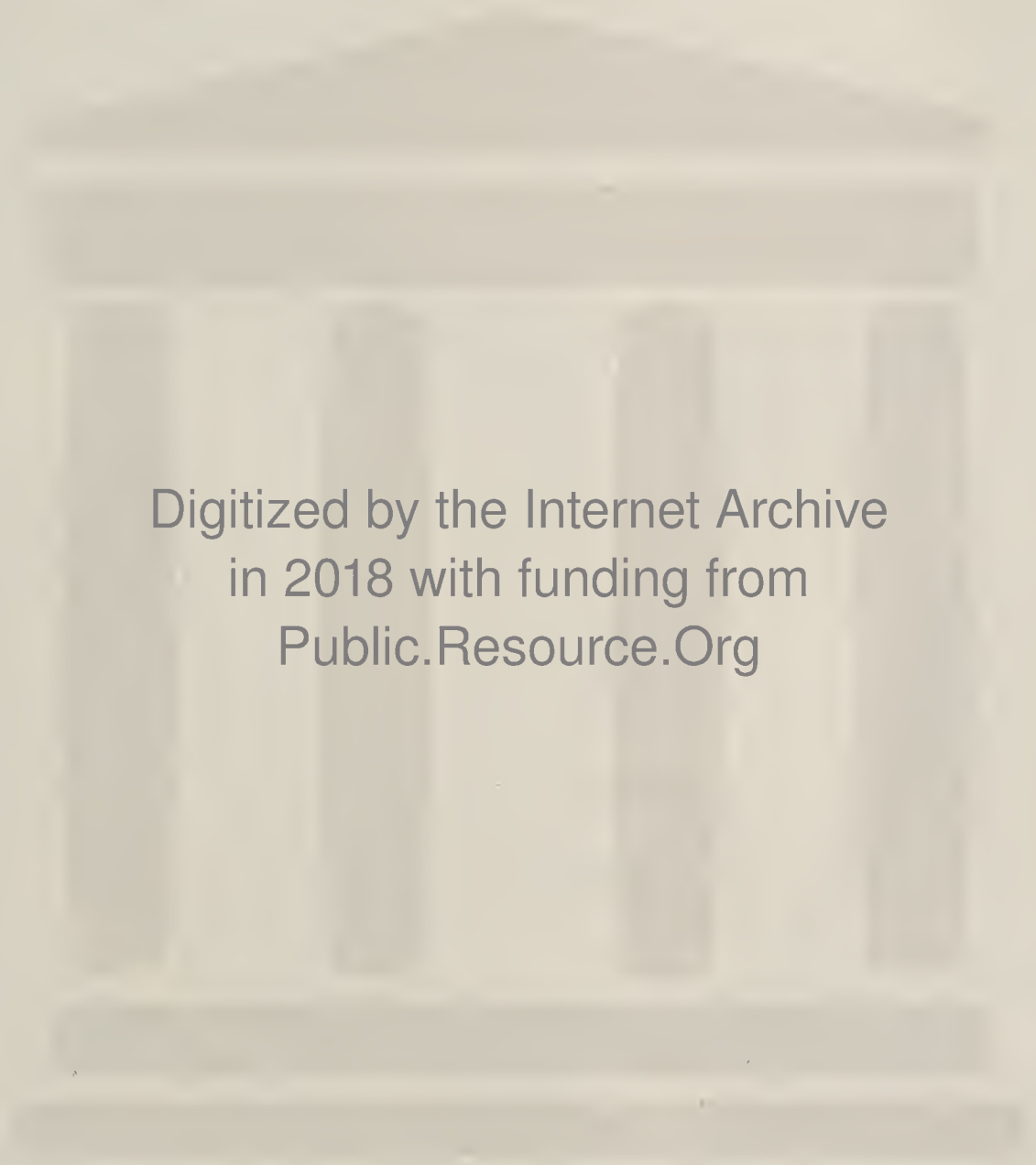


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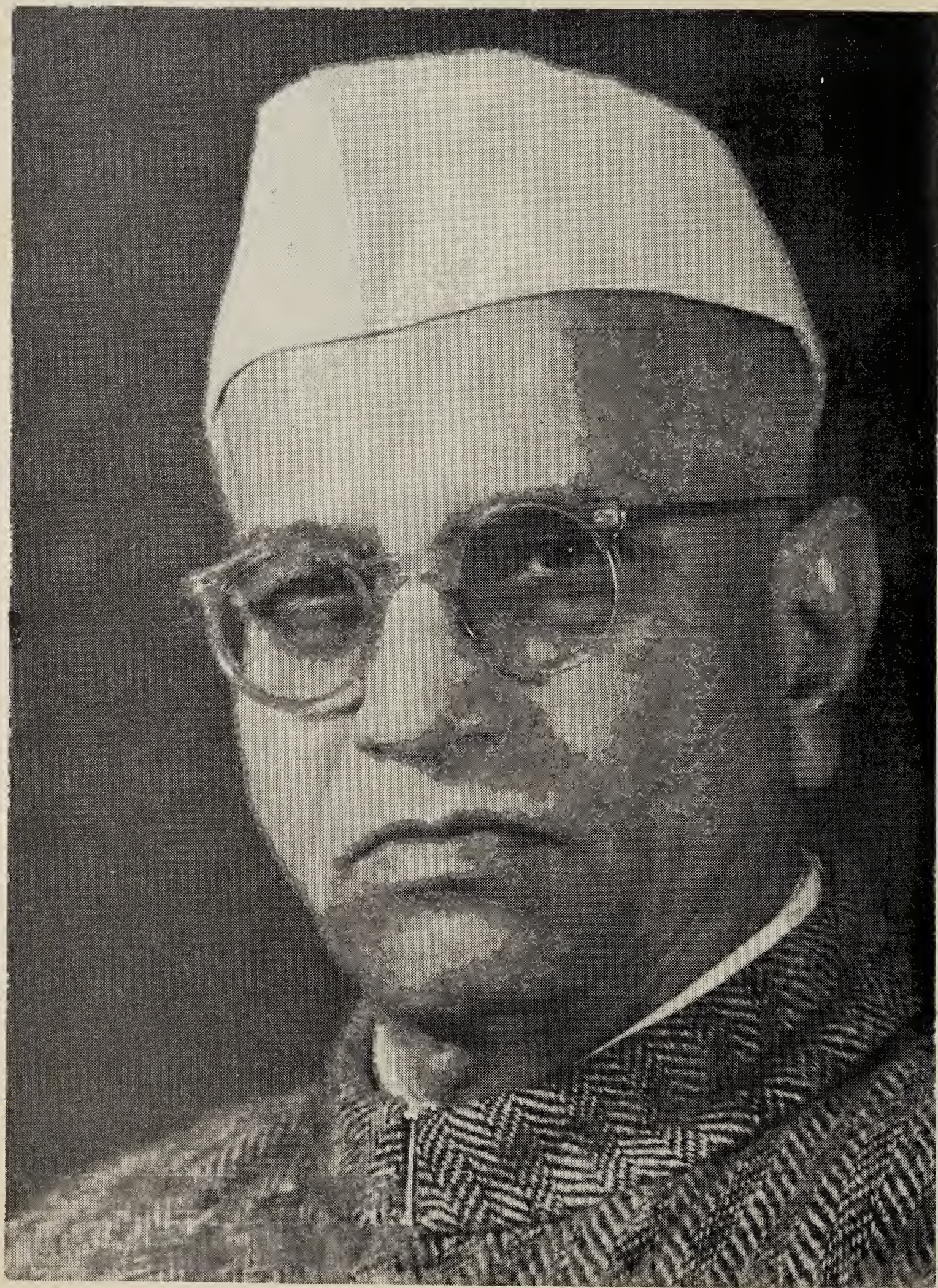
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BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

KAKASAHEB GADGIL

ARUN SADHU

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
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About the Series

The object of this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different people. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Shri. R.R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.

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GADGIL—Man of Principles

NARHARI VISHNU GADGIL, popularly known as Kakasaheb Gadgil, lived in the glorious era of India's freedom struggle when a galaxy of outstanding luminaries shone on the Indian horizon. It was the era when Mahatma Gandhi infused life in the masses and exhorted them to fight for freedom with his novel weapon of non-violence, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inspired the youths with his idealism and dynamism and when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, provided a strong and steady direction to the burgeoning enthusiasm of the people. There were many other towering personalities who contributed immensely to India's freedom struggle. Kakasaheb was partly a product of that era and partly a creator of the noble ethos of that period. He was among those who, after fighting a long struggle for freedom, went through the agony of partition and laid the foundation of a strong, prosperous and united free India in the midst of overwhelming odds.

Kakasaheb Gadgil was not a front rank leader. But he was a leader of the masses who perfectly understood his role in the freedom struggle and in the critical days after partition. He did his utmost to mould the world around him according to his light. A man of unshakeable integrity and principles, Gadgil was a leader and a teacher of the masses, a skillful organiser of the people, an astute administrator and a true democrat to the core. His life was an open book. Frank and outspoken, Kakasaheb never compromised his principles for the love of office as the Union Cabinet Minister or the Governor of Punjab, he set an example of austerity and integrity in public life. He took upon himself the task of educating the people in their own language the meaning of freedom, the need to fight for it, the nuances of modern

economy and politics; and later when India became independent, he taught the true meaning of democracy by his words and deeds.

An erudite scholar of Sanskrit and Marathi classic literature, Kakasaheb always thought about the man on the street and spoke and wrote in the language of the downtrodden. His most lucid book on basic economics is addressed to 'Gyanba', the rural common man. During the freedom struggle, he was jailed by the British Government several times and he willingly suffered penury for having devoted his entire life to the country. Though born in an orthodox Brahmin family, Kakasaheb had crossed the barriers of caste and creed mentally long before he actively led the satyagrahas to win equality for the 'untouchables'.

Like most educated youths of Pune of his time, Kakasaheb Gadgil was inspired by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak whom he saw from close quarters early in life. Having spent most of his formative years in the renaissance atmosphere of Pune, surcharged with the talk of freedom and defiance of the foreign rulers, it was natural that a sensitive young man like Gadgil should have no thought of making a career for himself. He made a conscious decision early in life that fighting for freedom and serving the country and its people would be the mission and career of his life. Gradually, he came under the charismatic influence of Mahatma Gandhi and became a disciplined soldier of the Congress movement. Ever since, his faith and loyalty to the Congress remained unshakeable despite several crises till he breathed his last.

From 1925 onwards, Kakasaheb Gadgil was by far the most prominent leader in Maharashtra till he died on January 12, 1966. His most significant contribution has been to bring in the rural masses of Maharashtra into the mainstream politics of India. Since early 1920's politics in Maharashtra had vitiated under a dark shadow of Brahmin-non-Brahmin controversy. Gadgil was among the first leaders of Maharashtra to grasp the destructive impact of the controversy and strive to put an end to it. He was largely instrumental in initiating the process of inducting the non-Brahmin Maratha peasantry of Maharashtra into the mainstream freedom movement led by the Congress.

Kakasaheb attracted the attention of the leader in his youth because of his radical ideas and socialist orientation. He perceived a deeper meaning into the Brahmin-non-Brahmin struggle. It was not a caste conflict but a conflict between two classes, he told Maharashtra. The struggle was between the combined class of traders and priests who wanted to retain the reins of economic power on the one hand and the poor rural peasantry on the other, he preached. This incisive interpretation caught the imagination of many idealistic Maratha youths. Among them was Keshavrao Jedhe who developed a friendship and close political alliance with Kakasaheb. It was this powerful Gadgil-Jedhe alliance that brought the non-Brahmins of Maharashtra into the civil disobedience movement of 1930's on mass scale. Jedhe had belonged to the Satyashodhak movement which had largely remained sceptical of Brahmin politicians. Jedhe's alliance with Kakasaheb, thus, ushered in a new era in Maharashtra's politics. The 'Bahujan Samaj', as the Maratha peasantry was called, later became the backbone of the Congress freedom movement in Maharashtra. It is also significant to note that the Gadgil-Jedhe alliance first operated on a radical issue of to open the famous Parvati temple in Pune to 'untouchables'.

Another little-acknowledged contribution of Kakasaheb is that he subtly altered the attitude of the Pune-based Maharashtrian Brahmins towards Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience movement and towards the freedom movement led by the Congress. After the death of Lokmanya Tilak, a small group of Tilakite Brahmins steadily drifted away from the mainstream freedom movement and gradually came to resent Gandhi's Congress. It was Kakasaheb who made a dent into this group and thus laid a bridge between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins of Maharashtra.

Kakasaheb was a man of principles. He had no love for money nor did he seek favours. When his son, Vitthalrao Gadgil, went to England to study law, Gadgil was a union minister and offers of scholarships came on platter. Gadgil refused all of them and provided for his son's education from his meagre income. When he stepped down from the ministership, he faced financial problems. But he again refused help

for his son's education and provided for it by selling his second-hand car. Many in Pune still recall the days when Gadgil patiently stood in the bus queues in Pune to move about only a few days after relinquishing the Governorship of Punjab.

Democracy was an article of faith for him. Even his home was a true example of democratic functioning. During the height of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement for formation of linguistic Maharashtra State, even his son and daughter campaigned against him in the elections as he refused to leave the Congress Party in the face of public uproar. But Kakasaheb took it sportingly conceding his son's right to have a difference of opinion. His insistence on following the democratic methods embarrassed many on some occasions. He was among the few cabinet ministers who would bluntly express his difference of opinion in front of Jawaharlal Nehru without caring for consequences. Nehru himself being a true democrat, loved and respected Kakasaheb.

In Congress politics, Kakasaheb was regarded as Sardar Patel's protege. But Kakasaheb saw himself as closer to Nehru in economic policies and disciple of Sardar in matters of practical administration. On certain issues, he fought both with Nehru and Sardar. Both acknowledged his administrative skill and dynamism as a minister. His contribution in the critical period of post-partition days in handling the problem of the refugees flocking to Delhi, the thrust with which he pushed ahead several power and irrigation schemes during the first days of independence, and his solid active support to Sardar Patel in consolidating the Independence of India by masterminding the merger of nearly 600 princely states in the Indian Republic will be long remembered by the people.

II

Early Life

NARHARI VISHNU GADGIL'S forefathers left poverty-ridden coastal area of Konkan in Western Maharashtra in the eighteenth century to seek livelihood. Among this group of Chitpavan Brahmins led by Balaji Vishwanath, who later became the founder of the powerful Peshwa seat in Pune, was Kondunana Gadgil, a scholar of Vedas and teacher of Sanskrit. Kondunana was involved in political affairs for a while when he was appointed as minister to the princely state of Akkalkot. But being of spiritual and scholarly nature, Kondunana soon freed himself from the administrative and political responsibilities and went to Wai, a seat of learning in Satara district, to set up home and continue his own passion of learning and teaching. Kondunana lived a contented life at Wai. He was gifted lands and houses by the then Maratha King and later the Peshwas to honour his learning and scholarship.

The British Union Jack was unfurled over Shaniwarwada in Pune, the seat of the Peshwas, in 1818 when the East India Company liquidated the Maratha rule. A new era had begun in India. The wealth and prosperity of the ruling classes began declining. The British administration took over the estates of those under tutelage of the Peshwas. Kondunana's grandson, Ramchandra, refused to go before the Inam Commission out of pride and dignity to salvage his estate. Life became difficult. Soon, his son, Narayanrao, left Wai to go to Pune seeking job. Kakasaheb Gadgil was the grandson of Narayanrao.

Times had changed. Priesthood no longer remained a paying profession in Pune. Brahmins, who lived under the generous religious patronage of the Peshwas, no longer remained a privileged class. They also began suffering pauperisation along with the lot of the common

people. But even as the British consolidated their power elsewhere in the Indian sub-continent, new seats of learning and English education were set up by them to mould natives who could help them in day-to-day administration. The Brahmins of Pune lost no time in realising the importance of English education and joined the ranks of the clerks.

The English education ushered in the great intellectual renaissance in Maharashtra. With the English language also came the new ideas and thoughts of liberalism, modern science, democracy, freedom and concept of nationalism. So powerful and rich was this new medium of knowledge that Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, the great nationalist scholar of Sanskrit and Marathi, called English language the 'milk of a tigress'.

In Bombay, men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Nana Shankarsheth and Karsanseth breathed new social and political ideas among the people. Newspapers, both English and Marathi, had begun to be published in Bombay and Pune. The second half of the nineteenth century was the most exciting and scintillating period in the intellectual life of Pune and Maharashtra. This was the period when men like Jyotiba Phule, Lokahitawadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar galvanised the social and political atmosphere of the country. They had already begun to dream of India as a free nation governed by its own people.

Narhari Vishnu, alias Kakasaheb Gadgil was born on January 10, 1896, when Maharashtra was being swept by these new ideas of social liberalism and nationalism. He was born in Malhargadh in Rajputana where his father worked for the railways on transfer. A little background of the father would, perhaps, help in understanding the atmosphere and the forces that moulded Kakasaheb's character. The Gadgils belonged to the orthodox Chitpavan Brahmin caste. By the time Vishnu Gadgil entered the English school in Pune, the family tradition of Sanskrit scholarship and priesthood had almost vanished. Vishnu Gadgil was fond of the new fidgeting Musical Marathi theatre. He left home and education to join a touring drama company, a dreaded event for any orthodox Brahmin family which jealously tried to protect its sons from the 'corrupt' influences of theatre groups.

The drama company was always on the brink of bankruptcy and as its manager, Vishnu had to strive hard and manipulate to keep it going. Finally, the company was liquidated and Vishnu found a job of a teacher in Khandwa in the then Central Province. He could well have remained there as a teacher as love for scholarship and teaching spirit was in his blood, but for his fondness of theatre. When another touring theatre group came to Khandwa, it suddenly found its main actor fallen ill. The company requested Vishnu Gadgil to act the part for the show which he gladly volunteered to accept. It cost him his job as the school authorities did not want a theatre actor to 'corrupt' their students. But resourceful Vishnu soon found another job, this time as a porter in the railways.

Recruited as a porter, Vishnu worked as a clerk and was confirmed in that post in short time. Shortly thereafter, he was married to Rangutai Joshi in Pune. Rangutai's age was just thirteen. The couple immediately left for Vishnu's place of work.

That was the period of expansion of the railway network in the Indian peninsula. Kakasaheb's father was always on the move being transferred from one place to another. He spent most of his life outside Maharashtra. He was a regular reader of newspapers and subscribed most Marathi journals of the time like Kesari, Induprakash and Jagathitechchu. Wherever he went, his home would become a place of social activity, informal meetings and discussions of current affairs. He spoke Hindi well. Thus Kakasaheb spent the impressionable years of his early childhood in the exciting and cosmopolitan environment created by his liberal father away from Maharashtra and away from the orthodox influence of Pune. And yet all the positive, social and political currents originating in that city made impact on this alien environment through the newspapers. This atmosphere must have contributed in moulding Kakasaheb's liberal temperament. Kakasaheb was a Poonaiter but not a typical Poonaiter. That is why, perhaps, he could play the catalytic role in later life of unifying the orthodox middle class and the rural peasantry in Maharashtra's political life. Kakasaheb spoke Hindi well and was proud of having been born in Rajputana. Partly out of humour and partly in pride, he would call himself the son of Rajputs. Though he loved Maharashtra, Kakasaheb never was

a chauvinist. During the thick of the linguistic Maharashtra movement, Kakasaheb got alienated from the more militant Maharashtra mood just because he refused to be swayed by chauvinist movements. He worked silently and patiently on his own in Parliament and outside to make the linguistic state of Maharashtra a reality. But he refused to be budged from his principled stand to curry a temporary favour with the masses.

Kakasaheb's mother died when he was four years old. Soon after, he was despatched with his grandmother to Pune for schooling. His links with the Hindi-speaking Central provinces continued as during each vacation he went to stay with his father. After the primary school, he entered the Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya of Pune, the famous secondary education school with nationalist orientation.

Pune was an important centre of learning and of social and political activities. Every event of national international importance had its echo in the city, either in public meetings, informal group discussions or in newspaper comments. Kakasaheb began his apprenticeship of public life by religiously attending such events in his school days. Those were the turbulent days when Lokmanya Tilak was a pivotal point in the life of Pune. Kakasaheb heard Lokmanya's speeches on several occasions. A novel method of nationalist propaganda in those days was to organise morning processions where men and children sang songs of patriotism, nationalism, self-reliance and praised the glory of India. These processions were called 'melas'.

Kakasaheb occasionally participated in these melas. He would recite these patriotic songs to his Hindi friends whenever he went to his father's place of work in the central provinces. Lokmanya Tilak had initiated the idea of celebrating the annual Ganesh Festival as a social occasion where people could be assembled on one platform without hindrance for nationalist education. Such was the dynamic social atmosphere in the city of Pune and no intelligent student could remain aloof from its mesmeric influence. Tall men like Tilak, Agarkar, Gokhale, N.C. Kelkar walked on the streets of Pune. Fierce debates raged on social and political issues. Stalwarts fought amongst themselves on the ways and means to fight the social ills and improve the lot

of the people. The atmosphere was surcharged. The streets of Pune were called the university of social and political education, specially so the famous vegetable market in the heart of Pune, the 'Mandai', a place by no account a beehive of intellectuals but a meeting place where rugged earthly men with strong common sense from the rural areas rubbed their shoulders with the middle class intellectuals. Lokmanya Tilak was called the vice-chancellor of Mandai University and Kakasaheb was its most devout student.

In school, Kakasaheb never compromised his fierce spirit of independence and sometimes suffered for it. He was always in the top grade of the class. Once a teacher questioned the originality of an essay Kakasaheb had written. On being challenged his authority and sense of fair play, the teacher punished Kakasaheb by imposing a fine. Kakasaheb fought the matter to the end and won justice. He played cricket and also had interest in wrestling as was the custom of the youth in Pune in those days. He read books voraciously, assimilating knowledge wherever he could. He had a simple faith in God but he began resenting the orthodox religious rituals from childhood.

By the time Kakasaheb reached the matriculation stage, his mind was already shaped. He had not conscientiously decided on any career in life. But destiny was irrevocably pushing him in the direction of public life. Kakasaheb could not avoid it.

III

Shaping of a Patriot

IRONICALLY, BRILLANT STUDENT though he was in school, Kakasaheb failed in his first attempt at matriculation. A casual carelessness cost him a year. In the answer paper for Marathi language, he wrote page after page fluently and went on unwittingly wiping out everything with a blotting paper not knowing that the ink he used was very faint. At the end, he realised he submitted almost a blank paper.

The failure taught him a lesson to be careful and meticulous in everything he did. He went to Bombay, studied hard and passed with flying colours in 1913. He made good use of his time in Bombay and frequenting libraries, attending lectures at Prarthana Samaj and meetings and programmes of students' brotherhood. He also participated in students' debates and practiced oratory.

Those were the days when the Indian nationalist movement under the leadership of the Congress party was undergoing a metamorphosis. The days of the fierce debate for priority between social and political reform, that characterised the struggle between Tilak and Agarkar, were long past. The supremacy of political reform was acknowledged. However, in the first decade of this century, Congress movement found itself in the throes of a struggle between those who pleaded mild reformist approach and those who wanted aggressive and dynamic reforms. Pherozeshah Mehta, the doyen of moderate reformists, was unhappy even with the ideas of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, himself a mild reformist receiving flak from the dynamic extremists. Mehta even did not like Dadabai Naroji's role at International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam in passing a resolution condemning the British rule in India. The younger elements in the Congress were crying for change and Tilak led these dynamic forces. While moderate reformists

were unwilling to annoy the British rulers, young extremists were bursting to go forward to foment discontent. In 1905, Tilak and his followers wanted the indignation of the people of Bengal over partition of that state turned into a national issue. The frequent famines, spreading of plague at regular intervals, the atrocities of the Government authorities in the name of controlling plague, partition of Bengal—all these issues were a grist to the mill of political discontent which Tilak was fomenting.

The struggle between the moderates and the extremists was straining the unity of the Congress movement. Tilak with Lala Lajpatrai and younger groups from Bengal went ahead with his programme of 'swadeshi' movement and boycott of reception to Prince of Wales on visit to India. The schism between the moderates and the extremists widened and the final rupture in the Congress movement came at Surat in 1907. Soon after, Tilak was sentenced to jail and deputation in 1908. The moderates then completely controlled the Congress till Tilak was released six years later.

Such was the political situation of gloom prevailing in India when Kakasaheb passed his matriculation and went to Baroda for University education. After a year of study, learning Gujarati and playing cricket, he enrolled himself in Fergusson College in Pune. Tilak was back in Pune from Mandalay and revived his political activities with vigour. The Second World War had begun. Though Tilak wanted to eschew certain concessions for the Indian people from the Government engaged in the war, there were many in Pune who felt that the Indian youth should avail of the opportunity of military and arms training. Swayed by these sentiments, Kakasaheb went to the recruiting camp, gave the tests and was rejected because he was a Brahmin, a 'non-martial' caste as per the British categorisation.

Tilak was a familiar figure in Pune. Gandhi had not emerged as a national personality as yet. When Gandhi came to Pune in February 1915, Kakasaheb went to the Railway station to see him. Like all other, he was surprised to see the diminutive figure of Gandhi in Kathiawadi

‘feta’ alighting from a third class compartment along with his wife. Kakasaheb was disappointed not realising that this diminutive looking man was to make a profound impact on his life and on the life of this country.

Kakasaheb’s participation in politics formally began when he attended the Congress session in Bombay in 1915. He continued his studies but now he began to be more preoccupied with the national movement. The death of Gokhale, the course of First World War, Tilak’s Home Rule League movement, the debate in the Congress over giving separate electorates for the Muslims, the accord between the Muslim groups and the Congress at the later’s Lucknow session—all this made a deep impression on the young Gadgil’s mind. The Lucknow Congress had also demanded a self governing dominance status for India in the British Empire. The demand for Swaraj thus acquired a new urgency.

While political life was taking exciting turn, the struggle for life was hard. For Kakasaheb, it was difficult even to raise money for his term fees. His father had already retired. Kakasaheb tried to earn on writing articles but soon found out that the payment, if at all made by publishers, was too meagre. A college friend came to his rescue suggesting to accept help from a retired judge, Jamdar. The only condition was that Kakasaheb should repay the loan by helping poor students in future. Kakasaheb was deeply impressed by this attitude. In all his later life, he set aside a certain percentage of his income to help poor students and contribute to the social causes.

But the times were so surcharged with political movements that a sensitive youth like Kakasaheb could hardly confine himself to the academic corridors. Tilak had given his famous slogan, ‘Swaraj is my birthright’. Annie Beasant was rousing the whole country and Gandhi was fast capturing the imagination of the masses. His struggle for the farmers of Champaran in Bihar had suddenly catapulted Gandhi into national limelight. The country was being swept in a new wave of political awareness.

Kakasaheb followed Tilak’s advice to Indian youth to join the armed forces. This time he succeeded in his effort and had brief stint in the

Maratha regiment near Pune in 1918. But here again, fate willed otherwise. Kakasaheb's father died and he had to abandon the training in the reserved company. After doing his graduation, he went to Bombay to study law. He could not afford to pay even the entrance fee. But he managed by doing sundry jobs and finally settling as a teacher to a rigorous discipline and schedule, waking up early in the morning, doing private tuitions before attending the school, then attending the law college and finally snatching some time to spend in the libraries to read and think. After the epidemic of Plague, Influenza played havoc both in Pune and Bombay. Funeral processions jammed the traffic in the streets of Pune. Kakasaheb survived the attack of the dreaded disease.

Meanwhile, things were happening in India. The Government, alarmed by the home rule agitation, had interned Mrs. Annie Besant in June 1917. Soon, the British Secretary of State for India, Edwyn Montagu announced his government's intention of gradually developing self-governing institutions in India with a view to progressive realisation of responsible government in the country. The Montagu-Chelmsford report which recommended limited form of elections led to Tilak's formation of Congress Democratic Party which took full advantage of the opportunity to campaign for elections to reach its message of 'swaraj' to the people. The end of the First World War infused new hopes among the people of the colonial world. American President Wilson's 14-point programme, especially his spirited championship of the principle of self-governance, had lent new edge to the people's movements in the empire. Victorious England now had the moral responsibility of granting self-rule to the people under its dominion. The Communist revolution in Russia in 1917 had also sparked off new radical aspirations in the hearts of people suppressed in slavery.

Kakasaheb, while doing his study and appearing for the law examination in 1919, closely followed these developments and participated in action wherever, possible. Tilak had lost a case of defamation against a parochial British officer, Valentine Chirol, and had to pay the costs of the case to the court. Young Kakasaheb took lead in collecting funds for this purpose. Tilak was in England fighting

the case when the repressive Rowlatt Act was passed causing great discontent among the people. Gandhiji launched a satyagraha programme against the British repression. The movement spread and common people inspired by Gandhi came out openly in defiance of the suppressive law. It was the first time that Gandhiji had employed his non-violent weapon of satyagraha in India. The weapon proved so effective that it provoked the British repressive machinery to swing into full action. The whole country was ablaze with people's indignation. The police resorted to firing at several places. The most ghastly event was in Punjab when the police opened fire on a large assembly of satyagrahis at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. Nearly 400 unarmed men and women were brutally massacred. The whole country shook with horror. The civilised world bowed its head in shame. The people's desire to fight for their rights steeled with this gruesome bloodbath. In following December, the Congress Session in Amritsar was dominated by Gandhi's charismatic figure. From now on, it was clear, Gandhi was going to dominate the public life of India.

Kakasaheb keenly observed these events and participated wherever he could. He was elected representative for the Amritsar Congress but could not attend owing to illness in the family. But he did take active part in a protest demonstration against the felicitation to the then retiring Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, in 1919, and narrowly missed being beaten up by the police. The young barrister M.A. Jinnah, who led the protest demonstration, was there amid angry Parsi youths who wanted to rough him up for marrying a Parsi girl. Kakasaheb rushed forward to rescue him. A policeman caught him by the neck and in the heat of the moment, Kakasaheb hit the arm of the law with a slipper. The next moment, a fighting group collided with him and Kakasaheb tumbled down the steps of the Town Hall. Without thinking, he dropped the slipper from the other foot, no doubt exercising his new-found knowledge of law to do away with the evidence of assault on a policeman, and rushed towards Jinnah again. Jinnah was shouting, "Go home, friends, we have won. The meeting is abandoned". The reception could not be held.

In the confusion, Kakasaheb was rounded up by the police along with 50 others and taken to the nearest police station. Jinah rushed there and got all the demonstrators released. The British police officer, while noting the names, asked Kakasaheb his profession. When told he was a teacher, the officer said haughtily, "Hope, you have learnt a lesson today". Kakasaheb retorted, "All of us have done that".

Kakasaheb passed the second Law examination in 1920 and was married to 14-year-old daughter of Chaphekar in Pune. As per tradition in Maharashtra she was renamed Anandi after marriage. When Lokmanya Tilak died on August 1, 1920, Kakasaheb finally decided to plunge in the public movement. For that, he must have a means support his family. Practicing law was the best way to serve both these ends. And there were many glorious examples of men who practiced law and worked for the national movement. Within a few days, Kakasaheb established his reputation with his wit and oratory. But his heart was not in the courts. He spent more time in discussing politics than working over the briefs. Soon, time was to come when he would fully devote his life to the national freedom movement.

IV.

Lessons in Public life

THE PASSING OF LOKMANYA TILAK from Indian horizon and emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as the new charismatic leader, who could move the masses with his novel technique of non-violent protest, were simultaneous events. Gandhi's programme of agitation was getting acceptance from all provincial Congress committees. Curiously this development had a rather negative effect on politics of Pune. Tilakites were yet not reconciled to the death of their leader. Many of them believed that all political wisdom was concentrated in Pune. That a Bania from South Africa could teach them a few lessons in political wisdom was unacceptable to them. They ridiculed Gandhi's programme of Khadi, boycott of foreign goods and of government jobs as plan of inaction. They were sincere people honest in their intentions. But they could not grasp the charismatic hold of Gandhi's leadership which then was making a profound impact on the Indian psyche.

Kakasaheb Gadgil had no such reservations about the emerging new wave in Indian public life. He was of the view that if Tilak were alive, he would have wholeheartedly supported Gandhi's strategy. In fact, Tilak who was in England when Gandhi had given a call for agitation against the Rowlatt Bills, had commented after returning home that he would have certainly participated in the agitation. So, when Gandhians began mobilising in Maharashtra, Kakasaheb joined the movement with vigour, addressing numerous meetings and incurring the wrath of those who ridiculed Gandhi. He attended the Nagpur Congress in December 1920 as an active member participating in different committee discussions. He found the Nagpur session herald a sea change in the character of the movement. Class-consciousness

among its members had vanished and the people from all strata were truly represented in the organisation. The resolution on non-cooperation received vigorous support from common workers and those who tried to oppose it had to face wrath of the members. The Congress organisation was restructured making it into an effective tool to fight the British empire through non-violence.

According to the new constitution of the Congress, Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee was formed with its base in Pune, Mr. N.C. Kelkar, a liberal Tilakite and editor of 'Kesari,' was the president. He appointed Kakasaheb as one of the three secretaries of the Maharashtra Congress.

A brilliant idea occurred to Kakasaheb. Many students had left colleges following Gandhi's boycott call and to educate them, a national college named after Tilak was set up. Gadgil proposed in a meeting in 1921 that all nationalist lawyers should quit their profession and some arrangements should be made to organise funds for their livelihood. The idea received enthusiastic support and Kakasaheb publicly announced that he would stop his law practice for one year beginning from March 1, 1921, to devote fully to the national cause. A sub-committee was appointed to discuss the ways of mobilising funds to help these lawyers.

A few days after, Kakasaheb found that he was the only sub-committee members to attend its meeting. Nobody else, apparently, was prepared to shelve out money to support the idea. It shook him. He had almost taken a public oath to stop practice. And here he was with nobody willing to assist him to carry out the idea. Kakasaheb had neither land nor a house of his own. He lived hand to mouth and could not expect support from any relative if he were to devote full time to public service. He could not afford to follow his public oath and felt humiliated. But he made a decision that he would do law practice only to earn Rs. 50 per month and give rest of the time to public life for one year. Afterwards, he would work to earn Rs. 150 per month to save money so that he could leave practice in a few years and depend on savings. But the humiliation of breaking the public oath hurt him the most. He tried to compensate for it in later life by generously giving away substantial part of his income to public causes.

Mahatma Gandhi's khadi movement was gaining ground. Kakasaheb adapted khadi and convinced his young wife to follow him in this respect. He had begun touring the countryside to propagate Mahatma Gandhi's message and the Congress ideology. He took lead in collecting the 'Swaraj Fund' in Pune district, promoted the temperance movement by picketing before liquor bars. The year 1921 was a tumultuous period with the whole mass of Indian people kindled by Gandhi's message of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. It was only after a violent incident at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh (then United Province) in which a number of policemen were burnt to death that Gandhi withdrew the agitation and suspended the movement. Many Congress leaders were unhappy at the withdrawal and this caused a great debate in the Congress organisation. The main thrust of the non-cooperation movement was to expose the insincerity of the British government in implementing Montagu—Chelmsford act. In the provincial government, though elections were held, elected representatives had a very limited power while the State's governor had unlimited powers. Gandhi had called for boycott of state legislatures while a group in the Congress led by C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Vitthalbhai Patel advocated that instead of boycotting the legislatures, these should be used to expose the Government. The other group, led by C. Rajagopalachari and consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vitthalbhai Patel among others, wanted the boycott to be continued. The schism almost split the party after the withdrawal of the agitation.

Many of the old leaders from Maharashtra rebelled against Gandhi. Many felt that the move would damage Gandhi's image. But Kakasaheb was deeply moved by this step of the Mahatma and it also made him think deeper about Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. He realised that the withdrawal of agitation was a tactical move to prepare for a future and more intensive assault. Soon, Gandhiji was arrested and was sentenced to six years imprisonment for seditious writing.

Congress movement became listless after Gandhiji's arrest. Some life was infused in the organisation when its special session in Delhi in September 1923 debated the issue of contesting the impending elections to legislatures and decided in favour of it. Kakasaheb devoted

himself fully to electioneering, launching hectic tours in rural areas. The Swarajists captured the majority of seats in the central assembly. N.C. Kelkar contested as a Swaraj Party member and Kakasaheb, who had great respect for kelkar, contributed to his campaign by moving out in the constituency and talking to the voters. Though Kelkar was a staunch Tilakite, he did not abhor Gandhiji as other Poonaites did. Kelkar was a fair minded liberal with a great sense of justice and humour. His sedate life and scholarly habits had greatly influenced Kakasaheb. He took lead in organising social gatherings of Tilakites and Gandhians in Pune which helped a great deal in diffusing the tension in the two camps. Meanwhile, Gandhiji was seriously ill in the jail and had to undergo a surgery. Soon he was released by the British in 1924.

Kakasaheb realised that he could not carry on longer with the Tilakites of Pune. Time was when Tilak was contemptuously referred to by the elites as the leader of the commoners (Telis and Tambolis). And now the followers of Tilak ridiculed the Congress for opening its doors to the peasants and the downtrodden. Ironically, they ridiculed Gandhi as the leader of the commoners. Clearly, Kelkar's party had alienated itself from the people. Kakasaheb realised that as the Congress movement broadened its base, the elites and the middle classes distanced themselves from it. Kelkar was of the view that the princely states should remain and that they should only introduce certain reforms. Kakasaheb strongly advocated abolition of the princely states and bringing to book the rich landlords and the capitalists. The final rupture between the two came on the question of Swarajists accepting seats in the Governor's Executive Council. However, inspite of the political schism, the relation between the two always remained cordial. By now, Kakasaheb had given his total loyalty to the Congress and the Gandhian movement. He never wavered from this stand and his party loyalty remained unquestioned till the last day of his life.

Between 1921 and 1923, Kakasaheb was being elected to the All India Congress Committee from Maharashtra. In 1924, the Kelkar group in the Maharashtra Congress defeated him. But the next year, Kelkar saw to it that Kakasaheb got elected. That year, he attracted attention of the leadership at the Kanpur session of the Congress.

That was also the year when the bitter Brahmin-non-Brahmin controversy was hotting up in Pune and Maharashtra. Kakasaheb, instinctively a liberal person, was baffled by the adamant attitude of the orthodox Brahmins over the caste division, over the system of untouchability and over the religious rituals. He began openly attacking the caste system in his public speeches. Kakasaheb realised that many non-Brahmin educated youths, particularly the powerful Maratha caste youths, were unhappy with the Congress because they were not given due share in the movement. Moreover, the movement in Maharashtra was dominated by the Brahmins. Brahmins dominated politics and also captured Government jobs and professions. Educated Maratha youths resented the fact that they had no place in the social and public life.

Kakasaheb pondered over this situation, participated in the community meals with the so called untouchables and never made any distinction between a high caste client and an untouchable in his profession. Once when he went to Junnar in Pune district in connection with a court case, he was shocked to find that an untouchable client had to stand outside the local lawyer's room and carry on the conversation from there. An angry Kakasaheb protested and brought the poor client in the room. When the lawyer accepted his fees, Kakasaheb remarked, "You don't get polluted with the notes. How does his touch pollutes you?".

Characteristically, Kakasaheb was not very popular among the high caste people because of his strong and radical views against casteism. But even the non-Brahmins would look at him with suspicion. The prejudices carried from generations of caste fragmentation were so strong that it appeared an impossible task to break these barriers. No matter, what Kakasaheb said, he could not inspire confidence among the non-Brahmins. There were, as if, two nations in Maharashtra-Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

The non-Brahmin movement has played a significant role in the social and political history of Maharashtra. Kakasaheb's association and confrontation with it, therefore, has had a definite impact on the course of politics in Maharashtra of that period. The movement owed

its inspiration to Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, the nineteenth century social reformer of Maharashtra, who exposed hypocrisy of orthodox Brahminism and ridiculed the irrational inequality between castes and sexes promoted by perverted understanding of the religion. Shahu Chhatrapati, the Maratha prince of Kolhapur, carried the movement into the twentieth century. The thrust of Shahu's movement was to destroy the Brahmin domination over social, cultural and economic world in Maharashtra. He opened Sanskrit schools for the low caste untouchables and made them priests. By the second decade of this century, the movement had assumed a virulent anti-Brahmin stance.

The bastion of the non-Brahmin movement in Pune was Jedhe Mansion, owned by the high caste Maratha family of the Jedhes. The newly educated high caste Maratha youths of Pune had posed a formidable challenge to the leadership of Tilak and this had caused a bitter rift between the Marathas and the Brahmins vitiating the entire political atmosphere of the city. The schism continued and widened after Tilak's death. Keshavrao Jedhe, young and dynamic Maratha leader, was on the forefront.

In the initial stages, Kakasaheb could not really raise himself above this bitter struggle and indeed took a partisan stand on several occasions in favour of Brahmins. He also wrote in journals replying to the charges of non-Brahmin activists. Tilak was almost a deity to nationalist youths and anybody who attacked Tilak was worthy of ridicule in their eyes. Gadgil was no exception to this. He had had several confrontations with Jedhe.

Mahatma Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj, which aimed at reforms in Hindu religion, formed the basis of non-Brahmin philosophy. However, Keshavrao Jedhe, soon began realising that the non-Brahmin movement was drifting away from this aim. It had become a casteist movement losing the sight of the lofty goals set by Phule. At about the same time, Kakasaheb Gadgil too was engaged in deep introspection. He increasingly spoke against untouchability, against the oppression of the low castes by the high castes. He even spoke in terms of hegemony of the upper caste 'sethjis and Bhatjis' (traders and Brahmin priests) and the need to break this. His socialistic ideas

were taking shape in embryonic form in those days and his language was becoming increasingly popular with the downtrodden masses and the peasants.

One reason why the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra had turned against the Congress was that the orthodox Brahmin followers of Lokmanya Tilak held the Congress in their grip. The Brahmin leadership of the Congress in Maharashtra scorned the Maratha leadership and ridiculed the illiterate peasants. Kakasaheb Gadgil among the very few Brahmin politicians of the time who could look objectively at the schism and analyse it in terms of class struggle. He realised that without the participation of the non-Brahmin masses, Congress will remain a movement of the elite. Kakasaheb talked to the people and long pondered over the distressing problem. The crucial point was to win confidence of the young Maratha leaders. He had respected for Keshavrao Jedhe and the latter reciprocated it. But that would not bridge the chasm.

One fine morning, Kakasaheb called on Jedhe without invitation. The two had several conversations and debates over the caste problem and the Brahmin-non-Brahmin schism. But nothing could come out of the exercise. Each knew of the other's sincerity and yet the distrust and mutual suspicion could not be removed. For the Congress Brahmins, Jedhe Mansion was like an enemy camp. Jedhe was baffled to find Kakasaheb in his usual good humour entering his house.

"Here I am....", said Kakasaheb. "Bring me tea".

"What is it?", asked a shocked Jedhe.

"I shall sip tea and relax. You talk I will listen to you. Abuse me, condemn and criticise the Brahmins to your heart's content. Then tell me whether this mutual recrimination would solve the basic problem. Superficially, you might think it is a social problem originating in caste differences. But in truth it is an economic problem. Isn't it true that barring the Maratha princes, the landlords and the Sardars, the overwhelming number of Marathas are poor peasants and paupers? The peasants till their land but the cream of benefits is swallowed by moneylenders. The so-called high castes are no better economically.

Barring a handful of the rich among them, they slog on pittance for their rich masters. We belong to the same class. Our common enemy is the rich and moneyenders. The English rulers are also our enemy. Our enemies support each other. Think over this".

It is wrong to say that this little conversation was solely responsible for changing the political course in Maharashtra. The seeds were already there. Jedhe and his young friends were getting disillusioned with the blatant pro-establishment and pro-British stance of some of the Maratha leaders. They were touched by the nationalist fervour and attracted by Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy. The non-Brahmin 'bahujan Samaj' must be a part of the nationalist movement, Jedhe felt. He grasped the hand of friendship extended by Kakasaheb. The friendship remained solid till death parted them. Jedhe entered the Congress movement and with him came a powerful group of Maratha leaders. Gandhian leadership in the Congress movement appeared to offer to them a social reformist alternative which would end the dominance of the Brahmins.

Later, social and political historians of Maharashtra were to record that it was this firm alliance between Gadgil and Jedhe that led the movement of Maharashtrian non-Brahmins towards the Congress. In a few years, the character of the Maharashtra Congress had undergone a metamorphosis. Its roots reached deep into the rural areas and its sweep cut across the caste spectrum.

Mr. Y.B. Chavan, the first Maratha leader of Maharashtra to rise to the pinnacle and become the chief minister and later a union cabinet minister, has greatly acknowledged Kakasaheb's contribution in changing the face of the Congress. "Kakasaheb was foremost among those first leaders in Maharashtra who thought of giving a healthy turn to the caste-ridden politics and reached the heart of the people by acting in this direction", Chavan said in an article. The historic credit for erasing the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin schism in Maharashtra politics and bringing in the spirit of understanding and fraternity must be given to the Jedhe-Gadgil duo, Chavan said.

Thus, between 1924 and 1930, Kakasaheb Gadgil acquired a new status and prominence in Maharashtra's politics. His alliance with

Jedhe and the entry of Maratha leaders in the Congress movement saw the eclipse of Brahmin domination of the movement. In the process, Kakasaheb also parted company with orthodox Tilakite group of Pune. The Jedhe-Gadgil duo ushered in a new era in Maharashtra. In the post-independence era, the Maratha majority constituted the solid backbone of the Congress party. It also lent a solid stability to the democratic processes. The phenomenon had some negative repercussions which Kakasaheb himself had disapproved. But the assimilation of the non-brahmin masses in the national movement was a process of historic necessity. The importance of Kakasaheb's contribution in this process cannot be ignored.

Message from Lahore

KAKASAHEB GADGIL continued his law practice but never ignored his public responsibilities. The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed exciting events. The Congress had now totally accepted Mahatma Gandhi's programme. Gandhiji built up an extensive network of devoted workers throughout the country and inspired them to action. He inspired Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat to launch the satyagraha of small farmers in Bardoli against payment of unjust cess. The successful Bardoli satyagraha inspired similar agitations in the country. Mahatma Gandhi stepped up his organisational programme by encouraging opening of nationalist schools, Khadi centres, health ashrams and temperance groups. Kakasaheb whole-heartedly participated in them while building the organisation in Pune city and district. He also earned reputation as a lawyer.

He contested civic elections and attended the 1927 Congress session at Madras where he caused some sensation by tearing out boards at the venue indicating segregated eating places for Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The session passed a resolution calling on the people to boycott and proceedings of the Simon Commission. The commission, headed by Sir John Simon and appointed in 1927 was a follow-up step of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. But the nationalists were convinced that the appointment of the commission was a clever move on the part of the imperialists to mislead and divide the people of India.

The first leg of the commission's visit to India was marked by a spate of bandhs, hartals, demonstrations and lathi charges by the police. This was a preliminary survey by the commission between February 3 and March 31, 1928. The second visit of extensive interviews was

to begin in October the same year. It was to visit Pune on October 12. By this time, Kakasaheb Gadgil was president of Pune and Maharashtra youth league and vice-president of the Bombay state league. His modest home was the office of the Yuwak Sangh where young men like S.M. Joshi, N.G. Gore, R.K. Khadilkar, Shirubhau Limaye met often. When Bombay youth Congress leader, Yusuf Meherali, came to Pune, he stayed with Gadgil causing many orthodox Brahmins to raise their eyebrows. To have a Muslim stay in one's home in the orthodox Brahmin locality of Pune was an unheard of a thing. But neither Gadgil nor his wife paid heed to the critical and scurrilous remarks of the people.

The Simon Commission, on landing in Bombay, went directly to Pune. Gadgil was in-charge of demonstrations. The commission was shown black flags at each railway station right from Khandala. In the morning, a huge procession was taken out to confront the commission with slogans and black flags. The demonstration was a success and Kakasaheb's organisational abilities were well recognised. The evening protest meeting before Shaniwarwada witnessed a mammoth gathering. Of course, as an organiser, Kakasaheb had to spend quite a lot from his pocket. His home had already become a public place. Next year, when he contested the Poona Municipal Committee elections, he secured the highest number of votes. That was also the year when a son was born to him. The increasing family responsibilities did not deflect him from his public pursuits. He had become a marked figure in the eyes of the police. His house was searched several times.

At about this time, Maharashtra was convulsed with another historic movement. That was Babasaheb Ambedkar's fight against social inequality and caste discrimination. On March 20, 1927, Ambedkar led a march of the 'untouchables' to exercise their right of drinking water from the public pond at Mahad in the then Kolaba district. By law and by a resolution passed by the municipal committee of Mahad four years before, the pond, now famous as 'Chawdar Tale', was open to all castes and creeds. And yet no Mahar of the town had dared to touch the pond for fear of reprisals from the hot-headed orthodox caste. Ambedkar led the march to the pond and made the people drink the

water. The agitation as a success. But the headstrong orthodox youths attacked the marchers on their way back. Many were injured. The Mahad agitation proved its point and became an important landmark in the social history of Maharashtra.

The movement had its repercussions in Pune also. A harijan leader of Pune, P.N. Rajbhoj, was trying to organise a satyagraha to open the famous Parvati Mandir for the harijans in the city. When challenged by him, Kakasaheb agreed to accept the leadership of the agitation. In meeting at Kakasaheb's home on September 22, 1979, a Satyagraha committee was formed under the presidentship of Janba Kamble with Rajbhoj as secretary. Kakasaheb and Jedhe were the advisers. As usual, Kakasaheb's home became the headquarters of the agitation. October 13 was set as the date for Satyagraha. Kakasaheb planned to conduct satyagraha by batches and organised about 100 batches who would march up the steep hill of Parvati in succession. The whole city was rife with rumours that the 'mahars' (untouchable caste) had lost their heads and were out on a murder spree. Elderly Brahmins tried to dissuade Kakasaheb from the adventure.

On the day of Satyagraha, thousands of shouting, gesticulating opponents greeted nearly 300 satyagrahis at the foot of the Parvati hill. Rajbhoj, Kakasaheb, Jedhe, S.M. Joshi and another young man formed the first batch. The five men began walking up the steps amid the shouts of the orthodox youths. The mobs pressed on them even as the satyagrahi volunteers formed a human chain to protect them. Kakasaheb was manhandled and kicked. Joshi and Rajbhoj were hurt by brick batting. The priests had locked the temple gate. Gadgil's point was that it was a non-violent satyagraha and breaking a lock forcibly did not fit into the philosophy of non-violence. The satyagrahis staged a dharana before the locked gate for some time. But the temple authorities frustrated their efforts by keeping the gate locked for four months. Even the orthodox devotees, who were denied entry, did not protest against this injustice. But the satyagraha had electrified the atmosphere in the city. Kakasaheb had now truly emerged as the leader of the masses. The satyagraha also sealed the friendship and alliance between Jedhe and Gadgil.

Meanwhile, Indian political developments took a decisive turn. The Labour government in England announced a round table conference to thrash out the Indian problem. The announcement clearly implied that the Government planned to offer self-rule under Dominion Status. An all-party meeting in Delhi on November 1, 1929, and later on November 16, welcomed this move. But Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhashchandra Bose and other Congress leaders were not satisfied with it. Mahatma Gandhi wanted a clear assurance from Lord Irvin, the viceroy. The government refused to make any commitment beyond the statement made. There was a stalemate. It was on this explosive background that the Congress session was held in Lahore from December 25, 1929. This 44th session of the Congress proved historic for many reasons. It was here that the Congress, for the first time, gave a call for total independence. It was also here that Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership came to the fore for the first time. A very large number of people attended the Congress session in the biting cold of Punjab winter. By now, an influential group in Maharashtra had steered the Congress in the region towards the Gandhi-Nehru leadership. In this group were men like Acharya Jawadekar, Acharya Bhagwat, Kakasaheb Gadgil and Shankarrao Deo.

To suit the turbulent mood of the people, Mahatma Gandhi nominated Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Congress. The Lahore Congress had a mighty task of mobilising this mood and responding to the British offer. Nehru spoke in inspired tones and gave a clarion call for independence kindling the hearts of young men like Kakasaheb. "We stand today for the fullest freedom of India", Nehru declared. "This Congress has not acknowledged and will not acknowledge the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way. To it we make no appeal. But we do appeal to the Parliament and the conscience of the world, and to them we shall declare, I hope, that India submits no longer to any foreign domination.....(But) let no one, least of all England, mistake or underrate the meaning or the strength of our resolve.....A great nation cannot be thwarted for long when once its mind is clear and resolve. If today we fail and tomorrow brings no success, day after tomorrow will follow and bring achievement."

Apart from these inspiring words evoking confidence in millions of hearts, Nehru lent a global perspective to the Indian struggle of independence and won loyalty of radical youths by frankly confessing that he was a socialist. "India will have to go that (socialist) way too if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality though she may evolve her own methods and may adapt the ideal to the genius of the race", Nehru said.

The Presidential address breathed a spirit of revolt among the delegates. As the hour of midnight struck on December 31, 1929, the resolution demanding total independence was voted upon and the flag of independence dramatically unfurled. Kakasaheb was among the group of about 300 young men who took Nehru to the banks of Ravi after midnight in the biting cold. There the young men burnt the Union Jack, unfurled the tricolour of Congress and sang songs of freedom and patriotism.

The Lahore Congress and Nehru's presidential address made a deep impact on Kakasaheb Gadgil who actively participated in the proceedings. He was moved by the symbolic incident on the banks of river Ravi in the coldest hour before the dawn. "Stars crowded the cold sky to witness the glorious incident", he later wrote. "It was a night of record freezing temperatures. But the cold was made ineffective by the flames of freedom in our young hearts.....".

Within two days, the new working committee of the Congress met and directed all Congress members of legislatures to resign. It also called on the people to observe January 26th as Independence Day. On returning to Pune, Kakasaheb along with Balukaka Kanitkar went about the city rousing the people to observe the day. The atmosphere was packed with rumours and tension. The British repressive machinery was gearing itself. Kakasaheb was to read the pledge of independence.

On the appointed day, Kakasaheb though down with fever, presented himself before the historic Shaniwarwada, the remains of the palace of the Peshwas. There were about 15 volunteers. Kakasaheb was supported by Kanitkar, Antoba Kale and Gotiram Bhaiya. At 5.15, Kakasaheb read the pledge of independence and the others repeated

after him. The group was surrounded by the police. But unhindered, the men saluted the flag and shouted slogans of freedom before setting out in a procession which winded through empty streets before concluding into a meeting where again Kakasaheb and others made speeches. It was a grave breach of law. But none was arrested. The Independence Day celebrations were a resounding success throughout the country. The movement had found a new vigour. People wanted action. The Congress working committee met again in February at Sabarmati and passed the momentous resolution of launching the civil disobedience movement which led to the glorious episode of the salt satyagraha and shook the whole country paralysing the British Government.

VI

A Soldier in the Mahatma's Army

BEFORE THE CONGRESS began preparing people for the struggle ahead, the workers union of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway had launched an agitation for wage increase and went on strike in the last week of January. Kakasaheb, as ever active in public causes, had so far participated in the youth movement and the movement for eradication of untouchability. As a Congressman, he had studied labour movement and knew personally labour leaders like S.A. Dange, Nimkar, S.S. Mirajkar, B.T. Ranadive and Sardesai. Rambhau Ruikar, the leader of the strike, was Kakasaheb's class-mate. He was slowly drawn into the agitation. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was ever a supporter of the working class, wrote to Gadgil asking him to help the railway workers. Kakasaheb then fully plunged into the movement.

Kakasaheb was entrusted the responsibility of mobilising workers in southern and western zones, from Kalyan to Solapur, at one end and Nashik-Bhusawal on the other. He went about the task simultaneously working on several fronts like galvanising Congress workers for the struggle ahead and supporting the volunteers of Parvati temple Satyagraha. His law practice suffered. But he meticulously went on helping the affected workers. The strike failed and everyday, the courtyard of his house filled with retrenched unemployed workers. Kakasaheb spent from his pocket to give succour to them. S.M. Joshi, the veteran socialist, writes about Kakasaheb's touching involvement in the lot of the workers, his desperate efforts to raise funds for their relief and his devotion to the task before him.

"Kaka's courtyard would be full of railway porters and other workers before he returned from the court in the evening. Kaka would sit among them first, listen to their grievances, advise them, distribute all the

money he brought from the court and then enter the house", Joshi wrote in his autobiography. "But Anandibai (Kakasaheb's wife) never complained". Anandibai was full of public spirit and tender in heart. When Joshi had no money to pay the fees for the second term of law, Anandibai promptly handed him her gold bangle. She looked after the necessities of young lieutenants of her husband with sisterly affection. It was during this GIP railway strike that Joshi had his first introduction to the trade union movement. He became a veteran unionist in his later life. Like Joshi, several young men of Pune learnt the first lessons in national politics in the courtyard of Gadgils.

Meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi had set the stage for the historic salt satyagraha, a concept so simple in appearance and yet so profound in its impact that the whole world would bow in respect to this extraordinary Indian leader. Gandhiji knew that the imperial Government of Britain would not give India Dominion Status in real terms. To put the record straight, he put an 11-point demand to Lord Irwin, the then viceroy. The government's refusal to accept the demands was basis enough to launch the civil disobedience movement. And so the working committee of the Congress resolved in February to launch the non-violent agitation.

Picking salt was an offence under the British Law. Gandhiji declared that he would go to the seashore at Dandi in Gujarat and publicly pick salt to defy the unjust law thereby challenging the might of the imperial Government. Many ridiculed. But within few days the world would acknowledge what a brilliant political strategy it was and only the genius of Mahatma could conceive it.

Mahatma Gandhi set on the historic 200 mile march from Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad to Dandi on March 31, 1930. The Congress had directed the people to wait for the result of Gandhiji's satyagraha before launching the salt movement elsewhere. Gandhiji marched on foot all the way through the villages. Each day the procession grew, awakening the conscience of the entire country and attracting world-wide attention. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, whom Gandhiji had sent in advance to prepare the people for the march, was already arrested. The world watched in wonder as Mahatma went from village to village

spreading message of peace and freedom. The British repressive machinery waited nervously.

Gandhiji picked salt and broke the law on April 6 and the mass movement erupted in the whole country. The police resorted to violence to curb the peaceful movement but it spread like wild fire. Gandhiji was arrested on May 5.

Maharashtra too rose in fervour. But the regional Congress committee was in the hands of sceptical followers of Kelkar reluctant to follow suit. Kakasaheb held a meeting in Pune on March 12. Shankarrao Deo, recently released from jail, was in favour of launching satyagraha. Kakasaheb pressed sympathetic Congressmen not to let down the Mahatma. He asked Congressmen to announce their respective schedule to carry out satyagraha and promised that he would be free of the GIP railway strike responsibility before the month end and would stage satyagraha on April 8. By his fiery speeches he stirred the masses.

For four weeks from April 8 onwards, Kakasaheb made a hurricane tour, addressing several meetings and exhorting people to follow the Mahatma to break the law for the freedom of the country. The entire nation was on a massive move picking up salt and facing the police lathis chanting the Mahatma's message of peace and freedom. Finally, Kakasaheb was arrested on May 5 at Alibag for inciting people to break the law. When produced before a magistrate, he confessed he made speeches asking people to break the law. "I have done my duty for the freedom of the country. That is all", he told the court. He was promptly sentenced to six months of rigorous imprisonment and sent to Thane jail. Thus began Kakasaheb's career as a frequent guest of the British Majesty. He was incarcerated eight times by the imperial Government and spent five years and six months of his life in the jail.

The arrest of the Mahatma and later that of Nehru strengthened the people's determination and fervour. The movement grew vigorously with thousands of people courting arrest. On June 27, 1930, the Congress Working Committee gave a call for the boycott of the foreign goods. The Congress committees all over were declared unlawful and their office bearers were arrested. The nation was afire with patriotic passions.

Kakasaheb Gadgil was released from Thane jail on September 22. On returning home, he found the pace of the movement had somewhat slackened in Pune. Without resting for a day, he jumped again in the fray, addressing meetings, touring the countryside and exhorting people to rise. He organised several batches who courted arrest in satyagraha. The result was inevitable. He was again put behind the bars on January 12, 1931. This time, the sentence was for three months.

Even as the nation resounded with the civil disobedience movement, the Round Table Conference met in London as per schedule on November 12, 1930, without the representation of the Congress, the major party expressing the aspirations of the overwhelming number of people. The British Premier, while addressing the plenary session of the conference, made a conciliatory gesture. He offered that the party engaged in civil disobedience movement would be associated with the conference at any stage if it was willing. Soon, on January 25, 1931, the imprisoned members of the working committee were released. Finally, Gandhiji called on the Viceroy on February 16 to hold talks as the sole representative of the Congress. What emerged out of these prolonged talks was the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Congress withdrew the disobedience movement. A battle was won though the war was not over. Mahatmaji described the one-year struggle as a 'heroic period in the modern history of India'. Along with thousands of other soldiers of the Congress, Kakasaheb was released from Yerwada jail on March 5, 1931.

Kakasaheb Gadgil's sacrifices during the movement were duly acknowledged. He was elected as vice-president of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress and also as member of the All India Congress Committee in May 1931. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was not working smoothly. The rumblings of another struggle ahead were already being heard. Congress deputed Gandhiji as its sole representative to attend the Round Table Conference in London.

Gadgil had the opportunity to travel with Gandhiji from Bombay V.T. to Pune in a third class compartment. Gadgil's task was to guard the Mahatma during the journey. Gandhiji worked on the *Charkha* for about half an hour before lying on the bed. "Sing me a Marathi

lulaby", he requested Gadgil. "Marathi is better known for martial songs", Kakasaheb said. After chatting a while, Gandhiji slept. At each station, crowds pressed at the compartment. Kakasaheb's task was to fend the crowds and allow the Mahatma an undisturbed sleep. He was wide awake upto Lonavala and then fell asleep. He was embarrassed to find Gandhiji waking him up at Chinchwad near Pune. By that time, Mahatmaji had finished all his morning chores. Kakasaheb felt guilty but learnt a lesson. He decided that such a lapse would never occur in his life again. Each night before going to bed, he told himself of the time he must wake up. The trick never failed.

Gandhiji went to London for the conference. Kakasaheb's activities were in full swing. He was vice-president of Bombay Youth Congress. He continued the practice of holding study circles of youths on Economics, Politics and Hindi. He held conferences of farmers. When Subhash Chandra Bose came to Pune to preside over the Maharashtra Youth Congress, he stayed at Kakasaheb's place which by now had become a centre of Congress activities in the city.

But political atmosphere was again simmering in India even as Gandhiji pleaded the Congress case in the London Conference. Nehru was arrested and clamped in prison for agitation against coercive recovery of land cess in the then United Province. By the time the Mahatma returned from London on December 28, 1931, the country faced the prospects of another grim struggle. Gandhiji was disappointed with the Round Table Conference and was pained to witness the widening schism between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Government had returned to its repressive stance. The Labour Government in England was replaced by the Conservatives in October 1931 and the latter was showing its fangs. The Congress working committee gave the clarion call for the next non-violent agitation. The Government swiftly reacted by promulgating repressive ordinances on January 4, 1932. On the same day, Gandhi and Sardar Patel were arrested. The Congress organisations were declared unlawful. All over the country, most Congressmen, particularly the office bearers, were put behind the bars. Kakasaheb was arrested and detained at Yerwada on January 6. Another daughter was born to him when he was under detention. But he could see her only when he was released on March 5.

This time, Kakasaheb was determined not to stay out of the jail for more than six weeks. The next session of the Congress was to be held in Delhi in April in a spirit of defiance. Kakasaheb left home clandestinely to ward off the tight police watch. He reached Delhi to attend the banned session and was rearrested. On being released, he returned to Pune closely watched by the CID and was picked up at Pune Railway station. This time, he was sentenced to an 18-month term.

Whether in jail or free, Kakasaheb followed a rigorous discipline of reading, writing and educating the people around him. He never forgot his lower middle class roots and he was the first to rush to help the people whenever there was trouble. Often, he was the spokesman of the political prisoners while dealing with the jail authorities. Nearly half of his serious reading and writing was accomplished behind the bars. Many of his contemporary jail-mates recall how young political prisoners such as S.M. Joshi or even veterans like Jedhe used to guard the door of his cell and would not allow anybody to pass before his gate whenever he was busy reading or writing. He had an uncanny sense of wry humour. Whenever he was not busy writing, his cell was always a common meeting place where debates raged and discussions held.

At about this time, Gandhiji announced his decision to fast unto death on the question of separate electorates for the untouchables or the depressed classes, a consequence of the Ramsay Macdonald Award. He began the fast on September 20, 1932, and ended it on September 26 following an accord with the representatives of the depressed classes led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In the Nasik Jail, Kakasaheb supported this hunger penance by fasting for two days along with other volunteers.

Kakasaheb was released from the long prison term on September 22, 1933. After a hectic three-month spell of fiery speeches, he was again nabbed and clamped in for six months on January 12, 1934. By now, he had become a regular visitor to the British prisons. He had developed a habit of charting out a fixed schedule of reading and writing during the prison terms.

It was also during his first term of imprisonment in the civil disobedience movement that the friendship between Gadgil and Keshavrao Jedhe bloomed into an ideological alliance. In the solitude of the jail, their exchanges were more intense and debates fierce. Jedhe had participated in the 1930 satyagraha and was imprisoned along with Kakasaheb. It was after this jail term that Jedhe abandoned the casteist orientation of the non-Brahmin movement. He was drawn by the magnetic personality of the Mahatma and impressed by sincerity and honesty of Kakasaheb and he slowly veered towards the Congress. Jedhe believed that the economic recession in the international markets was partly responsible for the plight of the Indian farmers. Logically, the farmers must join the national movement to improve their lot, he was convinced. If Kakasaheb turned more towards the farmers, held farmers' conferences and tried to lend rural orientation to the Congress, it was also the result of his association with Jedhe.

By the time Gadgil was released on June 2, 1934, a new wave of legislative elections was about to sweep the country. The Congress which had boycotted the legislature for years, had now decided to contest the elections. Kakasaheb's name was proposed as a candidate for the Central Assembly election. Kakasaheb was unwilling to contest. When Shankarrao Deo asked him, Kakasaheb suggested that either Balasaheb Kher or Keshavrao Jedhe would be a better candidate. Deo said Kher was unwilling and Jedhe was not a voter in the relevant constituency.

Gandhiji was to address a meeting in Pune on June 9. He told Kakasaheb that the latter, as a disciplined soldier of the Congress, should agree to contest. "How can I contest?" Kakasaheb said. "I am not a rich person. I have just a small house".

"You are prepared to give your life to the country. Then where is the question of money?", Gandhi asked calmly.

Kakasaheb was touched. " I will think over it", he said.

"You won't need money. you will easily get elected", Gandhiji assured him.

Gandhi's pleasant humour also moved Kakasaheb. His son, Vitthal, wanted Gandhiji to sign on his autograph book. Gandhiji said smiling, "I charge ten rupees for autograph. But ask your father to give me five rupees and I will sign". Kakasaheb paid.

Gandhiji was to address a meeting in Pune on that day. At the entrance of the hall, a bomb meant to be dropped on Gandhi's car was mistakenly hurled at another car. Two police officers and occupants were injured. Mercifully, Gandhi was a bit late. People in the meeting hall heard the report but thought it was bursting of fire crackers. Kakasaheb instructed police to stop people entering the hall on the first floor to avoid panic. When Gandhiji's car arrived, Kakasaheb almost embraced him and carried him to the hall to protect him from another possible attack. The meeting was over in a few minutes. Gandhiji was sweetly unaware of the attack, Gadgil thought.

But in the evening when he entered the railway compartment amid heavy police bandobust, Gandhiji said calmly, "If they find the assailant, tell him, I have forgiven".

"Won't you give any message for Maharashtra?", Kakasaheb asked. Gandhiji looked at him steadily and said, "What message can I give?" His forgiving, serene look upset Kakasaheb. He could not think of what could have happened had the assailant found his target on that day.

VII

Astute Parliamentarian

EVEN AS INDIA'S attention turned towards electoral politics, the Congress committees were revived, the ban on them having been lifted on June 12, 1934. This period also witnessed the establishment of the Socialist Party of India by a group headed by Acharya Narendra Deo. The group was to work within the Congress with its own programme and constitution. Branches of the party sprang up all over the country. The first All India conference of the party was held in Patna on May 17 the same year.

The Maharashtra unit of the Socialist Party was founded on July 1, 1934, in Kakasaheb Gadgil's home in Pune. However, Kakasaheb refused to join the party saying Congress itself was a powerful organisation and it was better to bring about a change in the Congress to suit socialist objectives rather than establishing a separate party. Sooner or later, the Congress was bound to hold reins of power and at that time it must have progressive people within its fold to uphold socialist revolutionary ideals. Otherwise, power will go in the hands of the rich and the middle class and the Congress will not be able to do justice to the poor. Kakasaheb's socialist friends did not press him to join the party though it was established in his home under his patronage.

Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee drew up a programme of promotion of Khadi, removal of untouchability, promotion of inter-communal unity, advocacy of prohibition, national education, and development of small industry. Many party leaders were not convinced that Gandhiji's programme would lead to Swaraj. There was a rift in the working committee and Gandhiji decided to disassociate himself from the Congress for the time being. The

Bombay session of the congress met without him on October 28 and accepted most of Gandhiji's programme leading to reorganisation of the party.

The Maharashtra Working Committee of the party selected Kakasaheb and Jedhe as candidates for the Dual-Member Central Assembly constituency. Kakasaheb pawned his insurance policy and borrowed money from friends to raise funds for the campaign. The duo made a whirlwind tour of the constituency which consisted of Pune, Satara, Solapur, Ahmednagar and two districts of Khandesh. Their formidable opponents, Seth Walchand Hirachand, Narayanrao Gunjal and Sardar Patankar, had a basic advantage. Only those paying income tax and land cess over Rs. 60/- had the voting right. The income tax payers were mostly traders supporting Walchand and land cess payers were Marathas who favoured Jedhe.

Gadgil was told that being a Brahmin he would not be favoured by Maratha farmers. But he had an innate faith in the good sense of the farmers. He recorded that neither he nor Jedhe resorted to casteist propaganda. A few days before polling, Seth Walchand proposed, "Kala, let us have no loud propaganda, no public meetings. That will keep the atmosphere peaceful".

Kakasaheb said, "Your capital is your money power. That will go on working. My only capital is my speech. How can I stop speaking? I shall hit you hard but never below the belt".

Kakasaheb used the phrase 'haves and have nots' for the first time in this campaign. The young Congress workers were electrified and they worked ceaselessly for the last two weeks. Both Kakasaheb and Jedhe got elected polling almost equal number of votes. It speaks of Kakasaheb's absolute identification with the 'have nots' and his truly secular temperament that most Brahmin voters favoured Walchand while the traders divided their votes between Walchand and Kakasaheb. The Maratha farmers made no discrimination between their leader Jedhe and Kakasaheb. Few Brahmin leaders before him could rise over the caste syndrome as Kakasaheb did in this election.

Before the election, Kakasaheb met Gandhiji during the Congress session in Bombay. The Mahatma asked Kakasaheb how he was doing in the electioneering and then said, "What can I do for you?". "Please, pray for me", Kakasaheb said. I am doing it", the Mahatma replied. On hearing the result of the election, he wrote to Kakasaheb, "Victory reports are coming from everywhere, But I am more happy with your victory".

Much later, Kakasaheb came to know why Gandhiji showed so much interest in his election. A few hours before Gandhiji asked Kakasaheb about the election, Walchand had called on Sardar Patel claiming that his victory was certain. Walchand requested Sardar to ask Gadgil to withdraw. Otherwise, both Jedhe and Gadgil would be trounced, he told Sardar. Mahadeobhai Desai heard this conversation and had reported it to Gandhiji. Needless to say neither Sardar nor Gandhiji thought of asking Kakasaheb to withdraw from the contest.

The victory of Kakasaheb and Jedhe was a significant event in Maharashtra's political history. It symbolised the end of the strangulating grip of old leadership over politics. It also affirmed that the Congress nationalist movement, as led by Gandhi and Nehru, had taken deep roots in Maharashtra. As he often asserted, Kakasaheb Gadgil was a staunch Nehruite in his socialist views and economic philosophy. He remained so till the end. Later, in the post-Independence era, Gadgil differed with Nehru on many occasions but never on economic policies. There was a misconception in Maharashtra that Gadgil was Sardar Patel's man and was against Nehru. Nothing could be far from the truth. Kakasaheb often used to remark, "I am a follower of Sardar in-as-much-as I admire his administrative acumen and firm grip of reality in the internal affairs. But in economic matters, I am a staunch Nehruite".

Congratulating on his victory, N.C. Kelkar, the leader of the old Tilakite group, wrote to Kakasaheb, "I wanted you to get elected unopposed. But that was not to be. Now you are free to criticise me as I deserve or you desire". Gadgil thanked him but refrained from criticising him personally.

It must also be noted that Keshavrao Jedhe was reluctant to contest. When he was pressed to do so, he insisted that the other Congress candidate with him must be Gadgil and no other. Kelkar's group had supported Walchand. While both Kakasaheb and Jedhe rose above their caste schism, their supporters had still not come out of the prejudices. At one time during the campaign, some Brahmin supporters of Kakasaheb told him that Keshavrao Jedhe's followers were telling their people that only Jedhe was their candidate. "We must show our sacred thread and ask votes from the Brahmins", they pleaded. Kakasaheb threatened to withdraw his candidature if they solicited votes from Brahmins on this ground.

Before going to Delhi to attend the Central Assembly, Kakasaheb had to make arrangements at home. He had borrowed Rs. 6,000 from friends for the election which he was determined to repay. It was impossible to practice law now. He had three daughters and a son. Besides he had the responsibility of a nephew. The family tightened its belt. The housemaid who washed clothes and cleaned utensils was sent home. The music tuitions of the three daughters were stopped. Eventually, he repaid all the loan borrowed for the election. Within his means, it was not possible for him to take his family to Delhi.

Gadgil and Jedhe arrived in Delhi on January 16, 1935. They stayed together during their term in the Central Assembly and lived frugally. First thing Gadgil did on reaching Delhi was to go to Mahatma Gandhi and seek his blessing in the legislative activity.

Congress Party and the Nationalist Congress led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and M.S. Aney had won resounding success in the election. Congress won 44 seats besides the seats captured by the Congress nationalists. Bhulabhai Desaik was chosen the leader of the party. Kakasaheb Gadgil, along with Asaf Ali, was appointed whip of the party. Being a disciplined person who took his responsibility seriously, Kakasaheb immediately launched study into parliamentary procedures. In the first session itself, he demonstrated that he had mastered his subject.

There are many stories of Kakasaheb's presence of mind and humour. He would save an ugly situation in the house or a party

meeting with his typical Pune humour. Once Dr. Deshmukh and Asaf Ali almost came to blows in the house. "Look, Dr. Deshmukh, I am Asaf Ali", said Asaf Ali. "Look I am Dr. Deshmukh", his adversary retorted with a clenched fist. Kakasaheb rushed and remarked. "Look, I am Gadgil, your humble whip. Please go to the lobby".

The tension subsided. The three went to the lobby and chatted over tea.

In the very first session, the reform proposals, described in what was called JPC report, were agitating the minds of the people and the parliamentarians. The Congress Working Committee had rejected the JPC report, which, in its view, was calculated to perpetuate British domination in India. Instead, it wanted a constituent assembly to devise the constitution of India. Gadgil got his first opportunity to speak in the assembly on January 24. The subject was JPC report. Kakasaheb himself has reported that his very first speech received resounding ovation in the house. While rejecting the JPC report, Gadgil spoke of socialist pattern that India wanted. India needed freedom to eradicate poverty and to live with dignity, he said. "We do not want these reforms. Take them back. I would not say take them back and be damned", he thundered in conclusion.

"Your speech was damn good", Jinah told him. He was congratulated by Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Rajaji, Aney and many others. A Government member remarked, "Bhulabhai Desai spoke so sweetly. But Gadgil breathed fire". Walchand, who heard this remark, retorted, "He represents the people".

Kakasaheb Gadgil was an astute parliamentarian. He was elected to the Central Assembly and to Lok Sabha in the first democratic elections in the Republic of India. Throughout, he remained whip and later Secretary of Congress Parliamentary Party till he was taken in the first union cabinet by Nehru. In the house, he distinguished himself with his mastery over the issues he tackled, his wit, humour and repartees and with his deftness in using parliamentary forum for fearlessly voicing the honest opinion of the people. The experience stood him in good stead when he became a minister. M.N. Kaul, a former Secretary of Lok Sabha, who had the opportunity to watch

Kakasaheb functioning in the house, describes Gadgil as an absolutely first rate parliamentarian. He would never take a debate in Parliament lightly, Kaul says. Kakasaheb would always be in touch with members and was hardly ever taken by surprise in a debate. He knew the currents and cross currents behind a particular legislation. He was master of his subject, spoke without notes, such notes as he had were for purposes of reference. Kaul remembers Kakasaheb's piloting of the Damodar Valley Project Bill when he was minister. Gadgil not only piloted the bill but educated the whole house on the concept that was embodied in the bill. He would not be upset by an interjection. He would seize an interjection or a rude remark and would turn it to his advantage without wounding the feelings and susceptibilities of the members concerned. Kaul says those who watched and studied him (in the house) gained from his parliamentary feats.

Even while sitting as Congress member in the Central Assembly for the first time, Gadgil had grasped that the house could be effectively used to propagate the party's views and philosophy. The potential impact of each action or word uttered in the house was unlimited, he immediately understood. Thus, he deliberately remained absent when the Viceroy addressed the Central Assembly.

There was a convention in the Assembly that the members should rise and remain standing when a message from the Viceroy was being read. Gadgil found the convention abnoxious. He remained seated when the entire house rose as the message was being read. Bhulabhai, the leader of the party, turned to look at him but did not say anything. Later, in the parliamentary party meeting, Bhulabhai said it would have been better had the party decided on the issue earlier. Gadgil agreed with this but said his action was taken on the spur of the movement. It must be said to the credit of Kakasaheb that very soon the Congress party made a decision on this issue and party members disregarded the convention ever since.

Meanwhile, Gadgil's defiant action caused a sensation both within and without the house. English newspapers of Delhi captioned, 'Congress whip Gadgil sits tight over the message'. The Statesman, then owned by the British, criticised Kakasaheb for his 'ungentlemanly

behaviour'. He immediately became an object of curiosity and respect even among the Government members.

Though Kakasaheb was doing his duty well, at heart he was not happy with the political situation in the country. Basically, he was against the Congress contesting the elections and accepting office. He was in favour of a more dynamic programme which would lead to total freedom. But with Mahatma Gandhi's exit and Jawaharlal Nehru's absence from the country, the Congress organisation was becoming more rigid and listless. Parliamentary politics took precedence over agitational and revolutionary politics. The Imperial Government exploited fully the dilution in the agitational fervour of the Congress. The Viceroy, Lord Willington, knew the weaknesses of the Indian people and their leaders. He brazenly said, "If they don't work the Constitution, the Constitution will work them...". Gadgil fulminated in his speeches outside the house and spoke in revolutionary language. But he found that even Gandhiji was in favour of accepting the reforms and working the Constitution as it was.

The AICC met in Jabalpure in April 1935. By now, both Gadgil and Jedhe had entered the Congress Parliamentary Board. The working Committee met in late July 1935 to consider the question of accepting ministries in the provinces. However, time was not thought to be ripe to make a decision on such a crucial matter. The Working Committee said it was premature to decide on the issue and it would wait till the next Congress session. But from the seriousness of the discussion, it was clear which way the wind was blowing.

The Lucknow session of the Congress saw induction of ardent socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deo and Achyut Patwardhan into the working committee. Nehru was the President and the session mostly deliberate the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress condemned the Act but decided to contest elections for provincial assemblies. But Nehru was unhappy. He felt constrained by an overwhelming majority of Gandhian members of the working committee opposed to his radical ideology.

This led to a minor difference between Sardar Patel and Nehru before the Faizpur Session of the Congress in December 1936. While

Nehru was a radical socialist and against accepting the ministries in the states, Sardar Patel opposed socialism and was in favour of accepting the office. Both had staked claim for presidentship and it appeared as if a confrontation was in the offing. But Sardar Patel withdrew his candidature and the controversy ended happily.

The year 1935 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Congress. Shankarrao Deo was re-elected President of Maharashtra Congress. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President toured Maharashtra. Gadgil and Jedhe also extensively toured mofussil Maharashtra to enrol members. By the end of the year, the Congress membership in Maharashtra had shot up to 27,806. For the first time, the rural members outnumbered the urban ones, a feat accomplished mostly because of the firm alliance between Jedhe and Kakasaheb.

There were two more tasks immediately ahead before the duo. The distant drums of the provincial legislature elections were being heard. It was being suggested that some Congress members of the Central Assembly should go down to provinces to contest elections. But both Jedhe and Gadgil were firmly opposed to accepting offices in the provinces. Their stature was quite high in the party and both were supposed to be candidates for ministerial offices. But both declined to contest. However, the major responsibility of electioneering for the party would fall on them.

The Congress session of 1936 was due to be held in Maharashtra. The leadership, especially Mahatma Gandhi, wanted the session to be held in rural setting. The motive behind this was to take the organisation to the villages. After some debate, Faizpur in North Maharashtra was chosen as the venue. Kakasaheb and Jedhe again went out to meet the people to mobilise them for the session continuously touring from village to village from May to August 1936. The result was over 100,000 people attended the session at this obscure place. It was for the first time that the Congress was meeting not in urban surroundings. In the initial controversy over the presidentship, Kakasaheb and Jedhe were on the side of Nehru. The session infused a new buoyant spirit in the organisation in Maharashtra.

Nehru's Presidential address inspired the younger elements in the Congress. Nehru spoke when war clouds had cast a dark shadow over most of Europe. He made a scathing analysis of the world situation, condemned the rise of Fascism in Germany and rise of Franco in Spain and bitterly criticised the spineless attitude of British imperialism towards Fascist forces.

Nehru also reaffirmed the socialistic ideals of the Congress. He spoke strongly against accepting office in provinces. According to him, this would mean not only acquiescence in British imperialism but partnership thereof. However, as the events turned out, Nehru's views in this respect could not prevail and later, after the provincial elections, the Congress did assume office in several provinces. But in this session, the Congress passed a resolution calling on the people to observe April 1, 1937, as an all-India protest day to mark the Congress disapproval of the Government of India Act which was to come into operation from that date. Kakasaheb moved a resolution on agricultural conditions and spoke on it for half an hour. He participated actively in several debates and controlled the unmanageable crowds.

By January 1937, the provincial election campaigns had picked up. Shankarrao Deo was ill and so the task of leading the Congress in the electioneering fell mostly on Gadgil. He was ably assisted by Jedhe. Here again, the two strived hard to erase the animosity between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Several candidates tried to exploit the caste angle. But Jedhe and Gadgil remained firm and refused to budge from their conciliatory approach. At several places, they were threatened by the orthodox groups, they were stoned and jeered. Marathas ridiculed Jedhe for toeing a Brahmin while the Brahmins scoffed at Kakasaheb for supporting Marathas. Kakasaheb's wife also canvassed among women. The campaign was bitter, hard and taxing. But the rewards were heartening. In the then Bombay province, the Congress party won 86 of the 175 seats in the assembly. It had contested only 110 seats. Of the 53 contested in Maharashtra region, it won 37 and of the 22 in Karnataka, it captured 15 while it bagged all the 22 seats in Gujarat and 14 in Bombay. Kakasaheb addressed hundreds of public meetings. His radical socialist ideas attracted the poor and the farmers. The Congress legislature party elected B.G. Kher

as its leader. However, both Gadgil and Jedhe were not interested in acceptance of office. They had only done their duty to rouse the people. Subsequently, neither in Bombay province nor elsewhere, the Congress formed its ministries and take office.

The Congress working committee met in February 1937 and congratulated the people of the nation on returning the Congress candidates in large numbers in provincial elections. The goal set by the working committee for the elected members was to work for ending the constitution and by means of a constituent assembly, to establish an independent and democratic state. Meanwhile, the Congress Parliamentary Party on April 2, 1937, elected Mr. Bhulabhai Desai as its leader and Kakasaheb Gadgil as secretary.

Despite the majorities won by the Congress in several provinces, it abstained from accepting power for some time. This created some controversy as many congressmen were in favour of forming ministries. The main obstacle in accepting power was the special powers invested in the Governors, in respect of backward classes and minorities and such other subjects, which overrode the powers vested in the elected ministries. It was only after the Viceroy gave an assurance to the effect that the Governors would not interfere but would be guided by the advice of the ministers, that the working committee of the Congress in July 1937 in Wardha permitted Congressmen to accept offices. Soon, the Congress ministries took over in six provinces. A new era had begun in India. Congressmen were to fight for independence by working the very Act they were fighting against.

VIII

The Turbulent Period

WHEN THE TIME for election of provincial Congress committees came, Kakasaheb Gadgil thought that Keshavrao Jedhe deserved to be elected President simply because he was mainly responsible for broadening the social base of the party in Maharashtra. The non-Brahmins and Marathas had entered the party in large numbers and the Congress owed its success in the elections to them. The 'Bahujan Samaj' or the non-Brahmins must feel in their heart that the Congress was their own party. Gadgil canvassed on Jedhe's behalf incurring displeasure of Deo and others. However, he could convince Deo and ultimately on January 15, 1938, Jedhe was elected President of Maharashtra Congress unopposed.

Jedhe's elevation to the post was a wise step of the Congress. All the presidents before him were Brahmins and his election wiped out the impression that the party was a monopoly of the upper castes. During his one year's tenure, the membership of the party in Maharashtra jumped up four fold and the rural representatives formed an overwhelming majority. With Jedhe's election, the Congress took a qualitative and quantitative jump. It became the party of the masses. Gadgil's historic contribution in this development cannot be overestimated.

In the district local board elections, held during Jedhe's tenure, Congress captured ten out of 18 boards. Of all the places, the party won a majority in the Poona Municipal Council, thus demonstrating that the Congress had come to stay in the Brahmin-dominated Peshwa city. The elections were held in September 1938. Kakasaheb's wife, Anan-

dibai, had begun taking interest in her husband's politics. She was set up as a candidate for a seat reserved for women from Shaniwar Peth, the home of the orthodox Pune Chitpavans. She lost the seat. When Kakasaheb tried to console her, she retorted, "Haven't I won the major election of life?"

Gadgil's was a busy household in those years. Kakasaheb Gadgil was a mobile person attending Central Assembly sessions in Delhi, going to the party meetings and sessions, canvassing in the elections, touring the state and the country. Anandibai too worked for the party. She conducted Hindi classes, adult education classes and mobilised women. She gathered a band of a dozen women to go around the poor labourers' localities and teach women there. Son Vitthal had set up a library at home lending books to children. The home was also a beehive of activities for Congress workers and leaders.

Even as the character of the Congress Party was undergoing a change with acceptance of office at various levels such as the provincial governments, district local boards and the municipal bodies, the ideological struggle in the party at the top level had acquired a new dimension. The emergence of Subhash Chandra Bose and the thickening of war clouds over Europe was the backdrop to this struggle. The socialist thought was gathering momentum in the country. At the same time the people, dissatisfied with the working of the Congress ministries, who had to operate under heavy constraints, were impatient for a change. Many found a new dynamic leader in Subhash Chandra Bose, who cared little for the means to achieve the goal of freedom. He was sceptical about Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence. When he was elected President for the Haripura Congress held in February 1938, new hopes were kindled in the hearts of young congressmen. Men like Gadgil, who revered Gandhiji for his greatness and adored Nehru for his socialist commitments, were also drawn by Bose's charismatic personality, his fiery dedication to the goal of freedom and his bold and dynamic approach. At the Haripura Congress, he gave a call to resist the Federal Scheme of the Government with all its undemocratic and anti-national features with all the peaceful and legitimate means, including non-violent agitation and non-cooperation.

The Congress also declared that India could be no party to an imperialist war. It opposed all war preparations in the country and declared that any attempt to involve India in war without people's consent would be resisted. The attitude India should take towards the impending war was a subject of a fierce debate in the Congress. In the meantime, the communal situation was worsening in India. The seeds of partition were sown and the extremist Muslim leadership, drunk with the idea of a Pakistan, was slowly deserting the Congress to join the Muslim League bandwagon.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted a Muslim to become the Congress President for the 1939 Tripura session of the party in order to win the confidence of the Muslim masses. The candidate in his mind was Maulana Azad. On the other hand, Subhash Chandra Bose was anxious to continue to be president to take advantage of the international situation to press for India's freedom. In the first place, Subhash was Gandhiji's nominee for the Haripura Congress. Now a stage had reached in the party where no candidate could succeed without Gandhiji's blessings. But this time, Bose had decided to challenge Gandhiji's supremacy and obstinately remained in the field. When Maulana Azad declined, the choice fell on Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Bose refused to withdraw while Gandhi mobilised all his forces behind Dr. Pattabhi. The whole country was divided. Maharashtra was no exception.

At that time, Kakasaheb Gadgil was elected President of the Maharashtra provincial Congress unopposed. The election of the Congress President was held on January 29, 1939. Gandhi had staked all his prestige on Dr. Pattabhi and other stalwarts like Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad campaigned as if Gandhi himself was in the contest against Subhash. But so powerful was the pull of Bose with the Congressmen that despite these efforts, he defeated Dr. Pattabhi. Gandhi took this defeat to heart. Gandhi, Patel, Azad and others resigned from the working committee. Subhash Bose was not in a position to form a working committee of his choice. Mahatma Gandhi's stance confused the party. The coming years were critical for the country and the people wanted Gandhi's leadership to guide them. The Congressmen, therefore, could not think of a working committee which was

not of Gandhi's choice. Subhash Bose had no alternative but to resign. Jawaharlal Nehru tried to forge a compromise between two groups. But he failed and he too had resigned from the working committee. Rajendra Prasad succeeded Bose to the Presidentship.

During this political turbulence, Kakasaheb did not neglect his parliamentary duty. As a whip and later as the secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Gadgil was responsible in no small measure in maintaining party discipline and unity. He took his duties seriously and tried to maintain an atmosphere of harmony and goodwill in the party forum by his humour and wit. For three successive years, Congress had succeeded in rejecting the Viceroy's budget. This was only a symbolic protest because the Viceroy had powers to ignore the Assembly's protest. Kakasaheb made a significant contribution in the discussion over the Sharda Act amendment bill. The bill was introduced by B. Das and the Government members appeared to be opposed to it. Gadgil made a scathing attack on the Government's attitude. He pointed out that there were in 1931, as many as 1,23,000 widows below 14 years of age in the country and 5,200 widows were below the age of one year. Only the British conscience would know how the Government so alert about violation of any other law turned a blind eye to this brazen violation, he said. The speech made a deep impact on the house. The amendment was carried subsequently.

Gadgil moved and got passed a resolution recommending to the Government to appoint a committee to consult on defence matters. He vehemently opposed the bill restricting the workers' right to resort to strike in pursuance of their demands. As a whip and secretary, Kakasaheb established a convention. Whenever a new bill was introduced in the house, he would study it closely and jot down points for discussion in the party meeting. The opinions expressed in the parliamentary party were jotted down and later incorporated in the amendment to be moved by party members in the house. He appointed a committee within the party to do this exercise. He would select members to speak on subjects of their interest. He made groups of members studying special subjects. The leader of the party, Bhulabhai Desai, and members were happy with this functioning.

Gadgil never lacked in preparation. Men like Bhulabhai and Jinah would listen to him in the house with attention because he would come fully prepared on the subject. A Government bill, providing for punishment to those who spoke against recruitment in armed forces, was being opposed by the Congress. The phrasing of the words was "speeches that are likely to prejudicially affect". The Government's intention was to show that formation of Congress ministries in the state had adversely affected the recruitment programme. Kakasaheb came to the house armed with statistics and in his speech proved beyond doubt that the recruitment was not affected at all between 1937 and 1938. He quoted figures of strength of each regiment each year to make the point. A nervous defence secretary wanted to know the source of figures quoted by Gadgil. M.S. Aney asked whether the information was wrong. Gadgil calmly said, "The figures were taken from your report which is freely available in the library". The speech was effective and many, including Jinah, Congratulated him. But it was not a total victory for the Congress. The phrasing was changed to 'Speech that has prejudicially affected recruiting...'. Nevertheless, the sting of the bill was rendered blunt.

Gadgil's diligence, scholarship, mastery of parliamentary procedures and easy manners that established rapport with most members—Congress and the Government alike the understanding of the issues he displayed and the breadth of his perspective won him friends and admirers in all circles. As V.V. Giri, later to become the President of India, wrote, Gadgil was an ideal Parliamentarian. He was respected not only by the members of his party but even by the opposition because of his high integrity and character as an able and ideal parliamentarian. Real democracy will be established in the country if only the present members followed the parliamentary traditions set by well-known leaders of the type of Gadgil, Giri wrote.

It was during this period that Kakasaheb caught the eye of Sardar Patel. As said earlier, Kakasaheb himself was a staunch radical often speaking the language of class struggle. He favoured Nehru's socialistic views and had opposed Sardar Patel during the tussle between him and Nehru for the presidentship. But Kakasaheb had respect for Sardar's pragmatism, immense warmth of his heart and his vast exper-

ience. Sardar Patel saw the qualities in Kakasaheb and began consulting him in party affairs and political matters. Kakasaheb's stock in the party rose. About this time, M.N. Roy made his presence felt in India. The Socialists had already set up a separate forum. Subhash Chandra Bose, after he was banned from the party for his alleged indiscipline, had set up the Forward Block. The Communists, who had been working within the Congress fold, had also come out. Now Roy came on the scene with his radical humanism. Some of the socialist intellectuals in Maharashtra were drawn towards Roy and he had a substantial following in certain groups. Among them were Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi, V.B. Karnik, Atmaram Patil, Y.B. Chavan and H.R. Mahajani. The group which operated within the Congress tried to induct Kakasaheb and Jedhe in their fold. But Kakasaheb remained wary of the group. Roy's thesis was that the time was not ripe for a socialist revolution in India. But a democratic revolution was possible. He wanted a radical group working within the Congress fold to give a socialist content to the democratic revolution. He was against socialists having their separate group. Many socialists did not agree with his views.

Kakasaheb had another son in 1938. Now he had three daughters and two sons. Family responsibilities had increased. But his preoccupation with the national movement had made his financial position precarious. It was difficult for his family to make the both ends meet. Even so, he helped freely whoever came to him for succour. In an unguarded movement he had promised a Harijan graduate to help him go to England for studies. Kakasaheb coolly handed him the promised money when the student came to the former's home along with his wife. Keshavrao Jedhe, who was present there, noticed that the student's wife was bedecked with gold and jewellery while poor Anandibai could barely maintain her 'mangalsutra', the sacred necklace symbolising the married status of a woman.

Keshavrao Jedhe lambasted his friend for his foolish philanthropy. Kakasaheb's reply was characteristic: "A crazy promise can only be rescued by its wise fulfilment. My temperament is to speak up what I want to do. The public commitment prevents me from breaking the promise myself to make amends for the mistakes and fulfil all the pro-

mises I owe..... Many think that some of the public statements I make are made on the spur of the movement. That is wrong. I think deeply all the consequences before committing myself".

After the Tripura Congress, Indian politics was in a state of flux. In Pune too, the local politics was ebroided in the mire of casteism. Doing his duty in the Central Assembly and in the national forum of the Congress did not absolve Kakasaheb from his local responsibilities in Pune. He headed a party committee controlling the local boards and civic bodies under party's rule. He tried to induct representatives from as many castes as possible to avoid bitterness among non-Brahmin and non-Maratha castes who felt discriminated against. His aim was to create confidence about the Congress forum among all the castes. But Brahmins misconstrued his action and he became a target of their criticism. The educated middle class in Maharashtra, particularly the Brahmins, had yet to shake off their distrust of the Congress nursed by Gandhi in the post-Tilak period. The local Marathi newspapers contributed to this prejudice and Kakasaheb had to face their ridicule. The Marathi newspapers, according to Kakasaheb, also tried to drive a wedge between him and Jedhe. They stoked the flames of the Maratha-non-Maratha controversy and vitiated the social and political atmosphere. Kakasaheb has recorded with distress that the apallingly inhuman crime of January 30, 1948—the murder of the Mahatma — was the tragic culmination of these prejudices and forces that operated in Maharashtra at that time. He tried on his part to check these forces. But he was working against the tide.

On September 3, 1939, British and the Imperial Government of India declared war on Garmany and her allies. The wishes of the Indian people were not taken into consideration while making the declaration. India was dragged into the war as an appendage of Britian. Congress, already rent with dissension, had to face this problem. How should it react to the declaration of war? Could India, a slave nation under the yoke of British imperialism, go to war with the fascists with honour?

The declaration of war was followed by a message from the King calling on the people of the Empire for their help in crushing an enemy

out to conquer world. The Viceroy of India, in his broadcast, told the people that the issues were freedom or slavery and that Britain was engaged on the side of justice, morality and freedom. He called upon India to make her contribution to the moral struggle in which Britain was engaged.

These were sweet words to the ears of a people under imperial bondage-Justice and freedom from bondage. But these words were uttered in distress. Would the British Government honour these words for the people of India when the crisis was over?

While the people of India debated the issue fiercely, Lord Linlithgo, the Viceroy, issued several ordinances for the security of India and invited Gandhiji to enlist his support to war efforts. Gandhiji expressed his sympathy but said he could not do anything without the consent of the Congress. The Congress working committee met on September 14, 1939, and expressed sympathy with the motives of the war. However, it resented India's being drawn into the war without ascertaining the opinion of its people. The working committee wanted the British Government to clarify its specific aims of war and also what it wanted to do about India's demand for total freedom. The Muslim League, which saw an opportunity to secure Pakistan, differed and immediately announced its support to the war efforts. Congress did not want to do anything in a hurry. It wanted specific assurances from Britain.

This was the beginning of confrontation between the Congress and the British Government that would culminate in the 1942 Quit India movement and finally the departure of the British from the Indian sub-continent. As a true Congressman, Gadgil worked hard to propagate the Congress line among the people. On the home front, the economic gloom, as always, hovered over the family life. He was the father of six children now. His erratic law practice barely earned the livelihood. Congress was preparing for another agitation which meant Kakasaheb would have to court arrest again. Anandibai had already sold her ornaments to meet the expenses of the family. Kakasaheb charted out a schedule of selling and pawning household articles in case the war prolonged and he was incarcerated.

Meanwhile, the All India Congress Committee met at Wardha on October 9 and 10 and confirmed the working committee's resolution. It urged extension of democracy to all colonial countries and the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate imperialist control. It demanded that India must be declared an independent nation. All that the Viceroy could say on this was that the Government would be prepared at the end of the war to regard the scheme of 1935 Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views. The Congress reaction was predictable. The working committee directed its ministries in provinces to resign. The Congress refused to cooperate in the war efforts. The fight had begun. The Congress was sympathetic towards the moral aspect of the war. But it wanted to help Britain as a free country.

The Congress Working Committee gave a call to the nation to celebrate the Independence Day on January 26, 1940, to express the national will to freedom and also as part of preparation for the struggle with a pledge for disciplined action. The pledge that was prescribed reiterated the right of the Indian people to freedom. It also reaffirmed the people's faith in peaceful, non-violent struggle.

For the ordinary Congress worker and the second rank leadership, it was the most frustrating period. Objectively, the main hurdle in achieving the goal of total freedom was communal disharmony and varying claims of different communities, especially those of the Muslim League led Muslims. The British, pressed to the wall because of the expensive war, were now genuinely interested in solving the Indian problem. But it was in their interest to exploit the communal schism and delay the inevitable. The Muslim League observed a Deliverance Day to celebrate the resignations of the Congress ministries. Ordinary Congressmen were asked to be ready for action. But they seethed with frustration for lack of direction from the leadership. Kakasaheb was distressed with the prevarications of the leadership and felt that the Congress as an organisation was becoming inactive because of the indecision of the party. But as the provincial president of the party, now re-elected, he had to follow the advice of Sardar Patel to go to the people and explain the Congress stand.

Kakasaheb toured the countryside to whip up confidence among the people. He would attend the court on a free day to earn something in a hurry. His wife was ill. He and Jedhe had taken initiative in constructing the Congress Bhavan in Pune. The loan taken for the purpose was yet to be repaid and Gadgil had to slog a lot to collect funds for the purpose. Prepare for the battle ahead, the Congress was saying. But nobody knew what kind of battle it would be. Gandhiji repeatedly emphasised the need to follow the non-violent methods. The people were getting impatient. Many were unhappy with Gandhi's stance. But so great was his charisma and so fierce was people's faith in him that they believed that only Gandhi could show them the way. The intellectual prowess of seasoned leaders paled before the Mahatma's luminence. Nehru inaugurated the Youth conference in Bombay on February 11. In his presidential address, Kakasaheb gave vent to this frustration. He cautioned the party leadership that a delay in launching on a specific programme would disillusion the ranks of the party and in the hour of need, the party would find its army listless.

Maulana Azad was elected Congress President for the Ramgarh session held from March 19, 1940. The session was nearly washed out owing to heavy flood of river Damodar on whose banks it was held. Nevertheless, it witnessed a struggle between the impatient section of the party wanting immediate action in the form of civil disobedience movement and Gandhiji who felt that the Congress was not sufficiently prepared for the movement. However, the session did pass a resolution asking Congress committee to form satyagraha samitis while promoting Khadi at the same time. The impatient extremists were distressed with this mild resolution. They even held an anti-compromise session under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Kakasaheb was among those impatient people. But his fierce loyalty to the Congress would not allow him to succumb to his doubts. He wanted action but he was of firm opinion that this action must be taken through the medium of the Congress. As the secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party, he sat on the dias. The session was to begin at 5 p.m. and it started pouring before it commenced. Within an hour the water level rose. Delegates fled through the mud. Kakasaheb and Asaf Ali stayed on the dias till it was in knee-deep water.

It crashed moments after they climbed down in the mud. The flooded river had entered the Congress Nagar. The Presidential address was delivered within fifteen minutes at an impromptu session the next day. Gandhi said he would launch the struggle when he was convinced that people were ready for it. He was ready to meet the viceroy a thousand times for a compromise. The agitation would be launched only if it was inevitable. No leader had courage to go against Gandhiji's wishes. Kakasaheb returned to Pune in a despondent mood.

But soon the wheels of the Congress started moving. The Government machinery had launched a repressive campaign. This had to be faced by Satyagraha. As President of the provincial unit, it was Gadgil's responsibility to organise the action. Gandhiji had laid down strict rules for satyagraha and for those who wished to participate in it. Great stress was laid on discipline and loyalty. Those who signed a pledge were enrolled for Satyagraha. Strict instructions were issued as to the behaviour of satyagrahis. They were given to understand that they would receive no financial help if jailed.

The preparations were protracted and yet Gandhiji withheld the final green signal. He wanted to exhaust all avenues for an honourable compromise with the British Government. Meanwhile, the Hindu-Muslim confrontation had taken a worst turn in spite of Gandhiji's sincere efforts. The cataclysmic war was taking its beastly toll. France had fallen and Hitler's armies roamed over Europe. The British army was routed at Dunkirk. The empire was in a tight corner. In this situation, Gandhiji's obstinate emphasis on ahimsa exasperated the Congress leadership. Finally, its working committee which met at Wardha from June 17 gave vent to its distress. Gandhi had given to the world a weapon in the form of non-violence to meet the danger of war, the committee said. But the committee had to consider the present temper of the world and felt that it could not go whole hog with Gandhi in the matter of adoption of non-violence. However, there was no change in the basic policy of fighting for freedom in a non-violent way, the committee said.

The subsequent working committee meeting in Delhi recommended that an unequivocal declaration of independence should be made forth-

with and a national government set up in the centre. It was only then that India could voluntarily throw all its weight in the defence of the country.

The next session of the AICC was to be held in Pune from July 27 and the responsibility of its organisation fell on Gadgil. Within three weeks, he made the arrangements. Nehru, Rajaji and Patel made fiery speeches in the session. But because of the absence of Gandhiji it could not make any decision beyond reaffirming the working committee's Delhi resolution.

The British continued their policy of repression while seeking negotiations with Indian leaders. The government, by an ordinance, issued a blanket ban on volunteer organisations. The atmosphere became stifling. Almost a whole year had passed in bitter debates, in cogitation and hesitation. The rifts within the Congress organisation had widened. It appeared as if the Congress leadership was breaking away from Gandhiji on the issue of non-violence. But that was a momentary wavering. Finally, the AICC in Bombay on September 14, 1940, came out with a clearer stand, a complete volte-face from its resolution in Pune. The Bombay AICC abrogated both the Delhi working committee resolution and the Pune AICC resolution. However, non-violent resistance was to be adopted only for preservation of civil liberties. The Bombay AICC went further and made a major policy decision. This committee, its resolution said, firmly believed in the practice and policy of non-violence not only in the struggle for 'swaraj' but also in so far as this may be possible of application in free India.

Congressmen like Gadgil, who were distressed with the confusion in the leadership, were happy that finally the party had abandoned equivocation and had arrived at a clear cut policy. The decision also helped to close the ranks in the organisation. Gandhiji established his supremacy in the Congress once again. But the stalemate in the political situation continued as the British stonewalled the issue of freedom by forwarding their usual excuse—the Muslim community did not want to entrust its destinies to the Hindu majority. Even Gandhiji, the soul of supreme patience, now prepared for a struggle.

IX

Individual Satyagraha and Quit India Movement

GANDHIJI EVOLVED A novel plan of action. It was not to be a mass satyagraha. It should be individual civil disobedience movement, he told a baffled country. Even the Congress working committee could not grasp the momentous significance of this strategy and Gandhiji had to almost force his will on the leaders. He was the General and others had to obey.

He chose Vinoba Bhave as his first satyagrahi in the non-violent battle. On October 17, 1940, Vinoba offered satyagraha by delivering an anti-war speech in a village near Pauran in Wardha district. He was arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru followed and he was jailed for four years. Sardar Patel was jailed on November 17. Everything was to go according to the plan chalked out by Gandhiji. Kakasaheb Gadgil's turn was to come soon.

But before that, he was directed to attend the Central Assembly which was to consider the supplementary finance bill providing for allotment for war efforts. Congress members were directed to oppose the bill. Kakasaheb Gadgil left for Delhi on November 7 leaving behind a new born daughter, the ailing wife and the family. He attended the assembly on November 15 along with the 44 other Congress members after a gap of over a year during which Congress had boycotted its proceedings. Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the party, made a tren-

chant speech condemning the British attitude in refusing to set up a provisional national government. Gadgil spoke on the bill for half an hour. Ridiculing the British stand over the communal issue, he said communal harmony was not possible as long as the British stayed in India. Leave the responsibility of defending the country to a free people and the people will rise like one man. The 1934 elections had demonstrated that the people of India were fully behind the Congress, he pointed out and said it was inevitable that reins of a free India should be handed over to the Congress. 'We shall be leaving here in two days', he remarked in conclusion. What will be the situation when we meet here again, he asked and said, "When we three shall meet again? —In thunder, lightning or in rain—when every hurly burly is done—life's battle is lost or won".

When Kakasaheb returned to Pune, he was ready to offer satyagraha. He, along with Jedhe, was to take a plunge on December 1. Before that, he had to organise the party office and scrutinise the list of satyagrahis. New enrolments were being made. The secret police proliferated everywhere. The name of every satyagrahi enrolled was sent to Gandhiji for his final approval. Each satyagrahi had to inform the date, time and venue of his agitation in advance to the district magistrate and surrender peacefully to the police. Many did not understand the meaning and importance of this exercise. Kakasaheb published a small booklet based on his speech explaining the method and philosophy behind the concept of individual satyagraha and distributed it in thousands. On December 1, Jedhe went to Saswad to offer satyagraha. Hundreds of people had gathered before Pune Congress House when Gadgil came out at the appointed hour of 9 a.m. to court arrest. He shouted a slogan thrice—neither a pie for war, nor a man for war—and was arrested immediately.

Kakasaheb and Jedhe, who were arrested in Saswad, were taken to Yerwada prison. Next day, he was sentenced to 18 months of simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 100. Jedhe was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for an equal term. The discrimination hurt Kakasaheb for it could create misunderstanding among friends. In fact, it was the British policy to sow dissensions among Congressmen by rendering,

discriminatory treatment to different satyagrahis. Fortunately, the friendship between Gadgil and Jedhe was strong enough to withstand this trick.

Kakasaheb was kept in a barrack along with Jedhe, Tatyā Deshpande, Bapusaheb Gupte, Shankarrao More, Moinuddin Harris and Faqui. In a few days, Sardar Patel, K.M. Munshi, B.G. Kher, Mangaldas Pakvasa were brought to Yerwada and kept in adjoining barracks. Only a six-foot wall separated them from Gadgil's barracks. Next day, Sardar Patel spoke to Gadgil across the cracks of a door in the wall. He inquired about all and about the satyagraha. From next day, he began sending fruits and eatable over the wall. Gadgil noted that it was only Patel who thus spoke to him and others through the door. The other detenues in the 'A' class barrack would not condescend to communicate. Gadgil's was in 'B' class barrack. But a busy-body as ever, he would take care of freedom fighters in the 'C' class barracks in various ways.

Here in the Yerwada jail, Kakasaheb was inspired to launch his writing career. His wife, Anandibai, wrote to him, "For many years you thought of writing something. Now you have time. So, write". Kakasaheb prepared a list of books he needed and sent for them. He got a desk and shelf to keep the books. Meticulous as he was, he prepared a taxing time table and planned to write two books—one on economics for common man (Gyanbache Arthashastra) and the other on Indian budgets. He would wake up at 5.30 in the morning, take bath in cold water, practice yogasanas and write from 6.30 to 11 with a small break for tea. At night he read from 8.30 to 10.30 and prepared notes. He followed the time table with discipline. In the afternoon, he read chapters from his common man's economics to two of his inmates, Popatlal Shah and Rambhau Girme to check whether what he wrote could be understood by novices. He finished writing the book on economics by June and launched the second project on Indian budget which he planned to write in three parts. From then on, Gadgil took to writing with a zeal and commitment. He read and wrote whenever he found time, in the thick of struggle in jails, in railway compartments, on the planes, in rest houses while on tour, in the parliamentary lobbies, in his ministerial bungalows or in the room in

his own house in Pune, contributing a wealth of information, knowledge and experience to Marathi literature. He wrote on politics, economics, sociology and personal experiences carving a niche for himself in literature as well as in the history of India's freedom struggle.

In June 1941 while in jail, Kakasaheb lost his youngest daughter. His wife had no courage to inform him for the fear of distracting him. But he read the news in a newspaper.

Outside, the individual satyagraha movement had caught on. Arrests continued unabated. Almost all the Congress ministers, parliamentary secretaries and members of the AICC were soon behind the bars. People had shown exemplary discipline in observing restraint in the face of provocation. Gandhiji was insistent that the agitation must not develop into a mass satyagraha. The movement bloomed methodically and peacefully. An endless stream of Congress workers peacefully marched into the jail chanting slogans of freedom, peace and non-violence.

In the meantime, war in Europe took a dramatic turn with Germany's invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941. The communists in India had filled the jails by opposing the war even before the Congress had begun its satyagraha. Now, with Russia joining the allies, the communists supported the war. With a view to appease the Indian people, the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council by appointing seven Indian members. This move, instead of making India happy, aroused universal indignation. Congress continued its satyagraha movement. But by the end of the year its workers doubted whether it had any impression on the British Government preoccupied with war. Gadgil described the individual satyagraha movement as war of trenches.

Especially frustrating was the attitude of the Muslim League whose fanatic followers spoke of shedding Hindu blood to get Pakistan. The British trotted out the Muslim demand for a separate homeland in every move they took. Communal conflagrations only strengthened the British hands and took the dream of Pakistan closer to realisation. In this context, the Congress posture of moral superiority further depressed its thousands of workers and leaders behind the bars. But as Gadgil realised, this frustration and despondency was more because of the

adamancy of the League's position than Mahatma Gandhi's stance of waging the fight strictly according to his code of non-violence and amity. Kakasaheb used to talk to Sardar on these issues through the closed door separating them. Patel's attitude was always characteristic, "Let us wait and see what happens".

Just when things seemed going to be stymied for a long time, the British Government, strained by war efforts and desperate for help, took action. It suddenly released all the political prisoners on a strange ground that it was now convinced that the responsible opinion in India was in favour of supporting war efforts. Kakasaheb was released on December 4, 1941. He felt that the 'trench warfare' of the Congress had secured the moral defeat of the Government. On returning home, he was busy with the Congress affairs on the one hand and on the other with mending the financial damages his household had suffered during his period of incarceration. He partly regretted having been released earlier than the term of imprisonment. Because the release abruptly disrupted his writing schedule.

The differences between Congress leadership and Gandhiji sharpened again and on his request, the working committee relieved the Mahatma from his party responsibility. By the end of the year, the country found itself in the same stagnant condition not having moved an inch ahead in the direction of swaraj. However, the satyagraha movement had caught the imagination of the world as a novel symbol of protest. Kakasaheb continued his mission of educating the people by speaking to the masses and addressing public rallies. When his first book was published on January 10, 1942, the family celebrated by presenting a surprise gift of a fountain pen to him, a touching occasion which he regarded as more memorable than any formal ceremonies of publication of his books in later life.

Even as Kakasaheb strived hard to keep the flame of people's patriotic passions burning, the stalemated political situation was disheartening. The individual civil disobedience movement seemed to have made no impact and there was no other concrete programme to involve the people in action. But Gadgil did not despair. He travelled through the countryside addressing public meetings and exhorting the farm-

ers and the people to join the freedom movement, explaining to them the Gandhiji's way of non-violence and the significance of the individual satyagraha. Predictably, the police promptly picked him up on return from his hectic tour and sent him to Yerwada jail on detention. He was out barely for two months. He collected his books, bundled his clothes, gave instructions to the family on how to meet household expenses and set out for the jail on February 5 to revive his writing-projects with vigour.

The Japanese advance in the East, meanwhile, heightened the war crisis for Britain which now looked for an early settlement to the Indian problem so that India's resources could be put to use in the war without much hindrance. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India with concrete proposals on constitutional changes in India. But the proposals were unacceptable to the Congress and the mass of the people. The Cripps proposals related to changes in future after the war. Congress wanted freedom as a condition precedent to cooperation in war efforts of Britain.

Sir Stafford Cripps was a well-meaning person sympathetic to the Indian cause. But Churchill was using him to gain time while all along Churchill's effort was to stall a compromise. The numerous negotiations Cripps had with Indian leaders failed to find a common ground. The abortive Cripps mission convinced Gandhiji and other leadership that the British would try to cling to the empire till they were forcibly driven out. Gandhi decided that he must raise the standard of revolt and drive the Britain out.

Kakasaheb, who watched these developments from behind the bars was released on April 20, 1942. He was a detenue and was not given reasons for his detention. War had intensified in Europe and in the East. The British Government, after having failed to secure cooperation in war efforts from the Indian people without giving any assurances, was in no mood to relax its repressive laws. While war raged outside, clouds of another battle for freedom gathered over Indian horizon.

The Congress working committee met at Wardha for over a week from July 6, 1942, and almost gave an ultimatum to the British Gov-

ernment to withdraw from India. Otherwise, the Congress would be reluctantly compelled to utilise all its non-violent strength for vindication of political rights and liberty, the committee said. In this atmosphere of confrontation, the AICC held its momentous session in Bombay from August 7 onwards. Everybody knew of the working committee's resolution in Wardha. The AICC was going to be a decisive affair. Kakasaheb was told that secret police were preparing lists of leaders to be arrested. Prison authorities had begun to make arrangements to accommodate a large number of inmates.

The AICC gave a call to the British to quit India and enjoined upon the people of India to launch a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale to achieve the goal. The resolution was passed on August 8 amid thunderous ovation. Gandhiji's hour-long inspiring speech stirred the people's hearts. Kakasaheb had noticed the unusual movements of the secret police at the hotel where he stayed. He went to his room late in the night and next morning at 4 a.m., he was woken up from sleep. A delegate said, Gandhiji and the entire working committee had been arrested.

The Government had made preparations in advance. Gandhiji and the other leaders were spirited away at midnight. The Congress committees were declared unlawful and all the leaders in all provinces were arrested. The Congress houses both in Bombay and Pune were occupied by the police. All processions and meetings were banned.

Being president of the Maharashtra Congress, Kakasaheb's name was high on the police list. In the early hours of that morning, he collected Maharashtra Congress committee members in his room and discussed future course of action. He would certainly be picked up by the police. Others should launch satyagraha, by breaking ban on meetings and processions. There were no other directions or instructions from the working committee. A Congressman said Gandhiji's message before he was arrested was 'Do or die'. The socialist group staying in the hotel, quietly slipped away eluding the police. By dawn, the CID men had positioned themselves at the gate of the hotel. Kakasaheb left for the V.T. Station by a taxi. He was followed by the police in another taxi. On the streets, people gathered in thousands shouting

slogans. Kakasaheb was arrested the moment he climbed down from the train at Pune. By that night, he was once again lodged in Yerwada jail.

The Government had calculated that it would wipe out the movement by arresting the leaders in the night. But people grew indignant and burst out in the streets demonstrating and shouting slogans of freedom in a non-violent manner. The police retorted through their lathis and guns. This further angered the people who expressed their wrath by attacking police stations, disrupting road, rail or telegraphic communications or burning post offices. A vicious chain reaction ensued engulfing the entire country in the fire of the agitation. At least at five places, mobs of demonstrators were machine gunned from the air. As per government records, between August and December 1942, the police opened fire on demonstrating crowds 538 times killing 940 people and wounding 1,630. Nehru estimated that 10,000 people were killed. The Government repression had reached its ruthless peak. It was, as if, the Government wanted to wipe out the Congress Party. The whole country was up in flames. The Government had miscalculated. The Congress was not a minor organisation which could be destroyed by arresting and spiriting away its leaders in the darkness of the night. The whole country resounded with slogans, 'Go Back....', 'Quit India....', 'Bharat Chhodo'. Women participated in the demonstrations in large numbers.

As usual, Kakasaheb took upon himself the task of organising the political prisoners in Yerwada Jail. He formed committees to look after distribution of food, distribution of mail, organising entertainment programmes and holding discussions on various issues. He was the spokesman of most of the political prisoners in all classes of barracks. Kakasaheb was given an independent tent for cell. He was given an assistant, a criminal prisoner named Munir, who was fiercely loyal to Kakasaheb. Kakasaheb's tent served as the central meeting place for all political prisoners and Munir had to work hard to make arrangements. He served Kakasaheb with verve and zeal. Pleased by his loyalty, Kakasaheb once asked Munir why the latter was so loyal to Kakasaheb. Munir replied, "Ah, once I picked a pocket in a crowd listening to your lecture. The pocket yielded Rs. 1200".

Most of the Congress organisation was behind the bars. No Congressman had remained outside to put forth the party's views. The British Government and Muslim League joined hands in laying the blame for violence during the agitation at the door of the Congress. The British maintained their refrain—India cannot be freed till the communal problem was solved. Those Congressmen who remained outside had to face repression from the Government or ridicule from the detractors. An atmosphere of despondence and gloom prevailed among political prisoners.

At a meeting in the jail on October 14 on the occasion of Dessera, most speakers expressed despair about the situation. As the President of the provincial unit, Kakasaheb struck a different note. "I am not a pessimist", he declared firmly. He was a pragmatic, believing in action. He believed not in luck but in action and work. "Victory is ours, even if delayed. Because truth is on our side. I was born in India under bondage. I shall die in free India. If freedom is delayed, I shall live longer. I believe freedom cannot be far away from us".

The speech made a deep impact on the inmates. Kher, Prime Minister of then Bombay province, asked Kakasaheb, "Do you really believe it?" Gadgil said, "I do not speak in two voices". Gadgil never lost his humour and refreshing optimism in dire distress. He was always the first to take initiative in bringing about understanding whenever classification of political prisoners caused rifts, quarrels and heart burning. Wherever possible, he tried to mobilise the ration of prisoners of all classes together for a common kitchen. He organised libraries, discussions on books and major public issues confronting the country and the society.

While Kakasaheb was in jail, his daughter got married in November. The son-in-law, Shrinivas Kembhavi, himself a political activist, had barely escaped being detained. The jail superintendent showed willingness to permit Kakasaheb to attend the wedding for two hours under police guard. But Kakasaheb refused the obligation. Next day Kakasaheb distributed sweets in the jail.

That night, three political detainees, Chhannusingh, Baldeo and Pandu Master, climbed the jail's fence wall and escaped. It caused

a sensation in the jail. Alarm bells sounded. The jail authorities were in confusion. Police reinforcement was brought from outside. The inmates of the camp jail were restless and tense. The jail superintendent sought Kakasaheb's help in pacifying them. Situation was grave and the police might have to open fire, the superintendent warned. When Kakasaheb entered the barracks, he was welcomed by shouting slogans. The jail authorities wanted to count the number of inmates. The prisoners refused. Kakasaheb talked to their leaders. They agreed to be counted by Kakasaheb alone.

Things had hotted up in his own section of the jail when Kakasaheb returned. There was a scuffle between a detainee and police. Confusion was compounded when the alarm sounded. All the barracks and gates closed. The detainees gathered near the gate. Police came in from outside. In a minor scuffle, Kakasaheb fell down bleeding with the blow of a lathi on the head. A whistle was sounded to call in the armed police. The situation was taking a serious turn. Kakasaheb remained calm. He got up, his head bleeding, and pleaded with the inmates to go back in the barracks. They listened. Firing was averted. Later, the jail authorities apologised for the incident.

Kakasaheb's whole family was involved in the national struggle. After her sister's wedding on November 11, Kakasaheb's 16-year old daughter was arrested in connection with Wadia College bomb case. He had permitted her to participate in satyagraha after she completed 16 years. But he did not know she was involved in the bomb case. She was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment and kept in the women's section of Yerwada jail.

Because of the violent incidents in the jail, Kakasaheb and a few other detainees were removed outside the main Yerwada jail. Outside in the world, the war proceeded on its grim course. Hitler's forces were taking a heavy beating on their second front in Russia. After Pearl Harbour bombings, the United States had entered the war theatre with all its might and resources. The Congress extremists in Maharashtra, led by Nana Patil, Kisanvir Patil, Pandu Master and Nagnath Naikawdi, set up a parallel government on 'patri sarkar' in parts of Satara district. The Government unleashed its propaganda machinery

to malign the Congress. Subhash Chandra Bose had escaped detention, fled to Germany and from there to Japan to raise Indian National Army to fight for India's freedom. The world opinion, however, was getting stronger in favour of India. Commodity prices had rocketed sky-high in India and parts of Bengal reeled under a catastrophic famine. The whole country was seized with desperation and the mood was deeper since thousands of British jails in India filled with Indian patriots. In the jail, Gadgil followed his schedule of writing with discipline. The book on economics was ready for printing. The series on Indian budgets was already out. He had planned to write two more books during this term. One on his experience of six years in the Central Assembly and the other on political science.

Gandhiji, pained by the atrocities of the government, had written to Viceroy Lord Linlithgow in protest. The Viceroy said the popular violence was the result of the Bombay AICC resolution and as such Gandhiji should withdraw the agitation. To counter the government's false propaganda, Gandhiji undertook a 21-day fast from February 9, 1943. The whole nation was perturbed. But it helped the nation revive its spirit of defiance. The British Government panicked fearing anarchy in case the Mahatma died during the penance.

People prayed everywhere. In thousands of prisons, political detainees held regular prayer meetings. Questions were asked in British Parliament. Three Indian members of viceroy's executive council, Aney, Modi and Sarkar resigned. The British government, now confident because of changing fortunes of the war, was adamant and would not change its stance. It even refused to acknowledge the seriousness of the famine. It was atrocious that the British Government was holding Gandhiji responsible for the violence which actually was the response to the government's repressive measures. Gandhiji's health was failing. The Government prepared itself to deal with the situation that might arise in case of his death. To the relief of the nation and world opinion, Gandhiji survived the fast.

While the whole Congress organisation was outlawed and stayed behind bars, the Muslim League played its game abetted by its British masters. Jinah insisted that creation of Pakistan was the only solu-

tion to the Indian problem. He warned that India would be engulfed in anarchy if power was handed over to the Congress as the sole representative of the Indian people. The voice of the nationalist Muslims under the aegis of the Congress was weak in comparison. Jinah contested Gandhiji's claim that he represented Hindus and Muslims alike.

Gadgil's family endured his prolonged incarceration stoically. His wife sold the silver and remaining gold to survive. Some of the poor peasants in Mulshi taluka, whom Kakasaheb had helped selflessly during the famous Mulshi trial, delivered rice freely at his home. A Journalist whom Kakasaheb had helped, showed gratitude by paying Rs. 50/- to the family each month. Gadgil was moved from Yerwada jail to Thana and from there to Nasik and Sabarmati. His studies and writing continued unabated. The book on economics was duly published. In Nasik jail, his jailmates, Jedhe and Gotiram Bhaiya ensured privacy for Kakasaheb to continue his writing undisturbed.

The Quit India movement had now abated. While the war raged outside, a deathly stillness prevailed in India the gloom being deeper with Congress in jail. By the end of 1943, the war seemed to be moving in favour of the Allies. The British Government began relaxing the restrictions. By February 1944, a number of detenues were released. In July 1943, Mussolini had fallen. Russia launched its great summer offensive against Hitler's beleaguered armies in the 1943 signifying the final stage of the war. British had recovered from the shock of German Blitzkrieg. The question was now being asked in world forums whether the British Government would fulfill the promises held out at the beginning of the war.

Kasturba Gandhi died while in detention on February 22, 1944. Mahatma Gandhi was released on May 5, 1944, after an illness. He rested for some time and then sought interviews with the Viceroy which was refused. Then he held a series of talks with Jinah to bring about a settlement of the vexed Hindu-Muslim problem. Jinah was adamant. "Hindus and Muslims are two different nations by any definition", he declared. Gandhiji was disappointed.

In July, the Government started releasing the remaining detenues by batches. On July 30, Kakasaheb was released. Keshavrao Jedhe

was released four months earlier. Kakasaheb had spent nearly two years behind bars this time. The happiness at being released was not unalloyed. India was still under gloom and freedom was not in sight.

X

Pangs of Partition

THE END OF the war was in sight. The allies were confident of victory. Having come out of the jail, Gadgil acted cautiously as per directives of the leadership. The Congress organisation was still outlawed. The condition of the satyagrahis now released was awful. Their families had suffered. The Congress funds were confiscated. Kakasaheb worked in his own way to organise help for these families. Many workers had now wedded themselves to the task of eradication of untouchability.

Chakravarti Rajgopalachari suggested a formula to resolve the Hindu-Muslim dispute. Gandhiji said in a statement that the formula should be considered. Gadgil studied the formula and found it workable. In the prevailing circumstances, the formula could also be used to go before the people, talk to them arouse them and make them think about the problem. He started explaining and propagating the formula. The scheme as suggested by Rajaji, envisaged immediate freedom with Muslim League supporting the Congress and cooperating with the Government. It suggested that after the war a commission be appointed to demarcate the districts with majority Muslim population in the North-West and the North-East. A plebiscite should be taken after the war to gauge the wishes of the people of each district on whether they would remain in India or not. If the districts wished to separate, there should be a common agreement on matters of defence, trade and other important subjects. There shall be voluntary exchange of population.

Kakasaheb propagated the formula with zeal. In August 1944, he addressed a meeting of the Bombay Congress legislature party explaining the merits of the formula and asked the legislators to consider the scheme on its merits. Kakasaheb's intention was to arouse the people and make them think of the problem. It was necessary to do so because with most major leaders still behind the bars, the people were listless, traders made profits and all looked well. Rajaji's formula was an attempt in these circumstances to keep the issue of India's freedom alive. Besides, Kakasaheb believed that the formula had merits. It exercised the principle of self-determination. The scheme had in it the seeds of Hindu-Muslim unity. Moreover, Gandhiji wanted the formula to be discussed thoroughly. Kakasaheb was criticised for propagating the formula.

During their talks, Gandhi and Jinah too discussed the formula. Jinah rejected the scheme. Gandhiji suggested amendments but Jinah insisted on a larger Pakistan. Ultimately talks failed. The British Government, now confident of the impending victory in the war, began talking of the rights of minorities other than Muslims. This vexed the people. Kakasaheb travelled all over Maharashtra and outside. He met underground leaders and helped those involved in court cases. He also visited the underground government in Satara district, the 'Prati Sarkar' and helped the workers there in many respects. The Government had decided to send the army to the affected areas in that district. The district magistrate served a notice on Kakasaheb preventing him from entering the district. He had organised a committee of four journalists to investigate into the allegations of British atrocities in Satara district. Many people, known and unknown, secretly gave funds to Kakasaheb to support the investigation. Among them was Vishnupant Chitale, the veteran communist leader. The Government resented these activities.

Kakasaheb decided to break the ban. However, he was told to seek advice from Gandhiji who was passing through Pune to go to Panchgani. Kakasaheb told the Mahatma his resolve to enter Satara district despite the ban. Gandhiji said that the underground movement may not last long. The army is moving to Satara. It was better Gadgil should not break the ban. Instead, he should seek Government's permission.

Gadgil told Gandhiji that the army could not flush out the underground workers. But the police, under the guise of army rule, would unleash a rein of terror. Kakasaheb was sure that the underground leaders could continue the movement at least for a year inspite of the army. His breaking the ban would help the movement, he told Gandhiji. The Mahatma did not agree. He admonished Kakasaheb saying he should not break the ban just for the heck of it. A satyagraha must have some aim and basis in duty. Just to go to the jail could not be the aim of a Satyagraha. Gadgil's duty was to remain out and he should face it. Nobody could call him a coward for not breaking the ban. On the contrary, if he broke the ban, it would mean he was trying to find an easy escape from the hard duties he faced outside, the Mahatma said. Kakasaheb said he would think over it. He would again meet him in case he decided on staging satyagraha rejecting Gandhiji advice. Kakasaheb thought over each word of Gandhiji and realised that was the 'only course open to him. It was his duty to carry on the movement outside rather than breaking the ban. Kakasaheb moved about quite a lot, as per Gandhiji's wishes, addressing meetings, explaining the current political situation and generally keeping the fire of nationalist fervour alive in an atmosphere of gloom.

Meanwhile, the war in Europe was drawing to a close by the end of 1944. German war machinery was retreating all along while the allied armies were in pursuit. Finally, the war in the Western hemisphere ended on May 8, 1945. The Japanese surrendered after the American nuclear bombs had annihilated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Parliamentary elections in Britain were to be held in July that year. Time had come for reconsideration of the Indian situation. Lord Wavell, the then Viceroy, offered to discuss a new scheme with leaders of all parties. On June 15, the Congress Working Committee members were released. Gadgil and other Congressmen welcomed Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankarrao Deo at the gate of the jail. Patel went to Kakasaheb's residence and spent about an hour there talking and making inquiries. Vallabhbhai asked Kakasaheb why he had been so zealous about the Rajaji formula. Kakasaheb's point was that it was

generally acceptable to Gandhiji and that if handled properly was not bad. When asked about the future, Patel's reply was, be ready; self-government is round the corner.

Viceroy Lord Wavell returned from a trip to England and brought with him a new package of proposals for a change in the Government structure till a new constitution was evolved. He called a meeting of leaders of political parties at Simla on June 25, 1945, to discuss the proposals. The Working Committee decided that the Congress should participate in the Simla conference. It clarified that the Congress would participate not as a representative of the Hindus alone but also a representative of Muslims and other minorities. Muslim League was not the sole representative of Muslims, the working committee and Mahatma Gandhi insisted.

The main point in Wavell's proposals was reconstitution of Viceroy's council so that all the members, except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-chief would be Indian political representatives. This arrangement would continue till the new constitution, framed by central assembly, came into being.

The Simla conference failed again because of the obduracy of the Muslim League and Jinah. The Wavell plan had it that Muslims and caste Hindus would have equal representation on the Viceroy's council. Their respective quota was fixed. Congress nominees included two Muslims. But Jinah would not allow the Congress to nominate any Muslims in their quota of five. The stalemate continued.

The Congress working committee met in July 1945 in Pune. The new Labour Government under Clement Attlee in Britain was expected to hold central and provincial elections in India. The committee discussed this issue. Kakasaheb, as president of the provincial Congress, was the host. Candidates for various seats were being discussed. Bhulabhai Desai, now bitter with the Congress leadership, advised Gadgil to contest for the Provincial Assembly. But Sardar Patel said Gadgil's place was in Delhi and so he should contest a parliamentary seat. The Congress had accepted the challenge of the elections.

The announcement of the elections generated a new wave of enthusiasm and optimism among the people. But the spirit of buoyancy was eclipsed by what had now seemed inevitable—partition of India and creation of Pakistan. The results of the poll were predictable. Muslim League captured most of the Muslim seats. The Congress was overwhelmingly victorious at all other places. Kakasaheb Gadgil and Bhausahab Hiray were elected to Central Parliament, Keshavrao Jedhe this time contested the provincial elections. But later, being the president of the provincial committee, he became member of the constituent assembly too.

The elected members of Congress central parliamentary party gathered in Delhi in February 1946. Kakasaheb, as secretary of the previous party, was asked to make arrangements regarding the election of the leader, deputy leader, whips and secretary of the party. Being a long time secretary of the party, Kakasaheb now aspired for a higher office in the legislature party.

It was his turn after Bhulabhai Desai, he felt. But the times had changed and Kakasaheb was realistic enough to acknowledge that after the transfer of power, the position of the leader of the Congress parliamentary party would be much too important and there were many others more worthy of it than he was. He obeyed the advice of Sardar Patel in selecting candidates for office bearers of the party. It was Patel who was taking more interest in these affairs than Gandhiji or Nehru. Again, it was the manoeuvring capacity of Gadgil to get G.V. Mavlankar elected as the speaker by a majority of three votes. It meant two Muslims had voted for Mavlankar. Jinnah walked out of the house when the result was announced. Gadgil saw ominous signs in this walkout. This was the first beat on the war drums, he thought.

The 1946 budget session of the central assembly was overshadowed by the Indian National Army trial and by the drums of Pakistan. The Muslim League's direct action plan to ensure creation of Pakistan had resulted in communal conflagration. An orgy of violence was let loose by the League from August 16, 1946. In Bengal alone, 6,000 people were brutally killed. Even the English newspapers like *The Statesman*, owned by the British, lay the blame on the League for the great killings.

As secretary of the party, Kakasaheb had substantial leverage with British officers. He worked hard to get released the leaders who were still behind the bars on various charges. Kakasaheb says in his autobiography that he had a long discussion with Sir John Thorne, the home member, on political detainees, particularly Jayaprakash Narayan. Kakasaheb says perhaps it was because of this conversation that Thorne saw Jayaprakash in jail. Kakasaheb was together with Jayaprakash and Achyutrao Patwardhan in Nasik jail and had developed friendship with both during the tenure.

Thorne met Kakasaheb after calling on Jayaprakash in jail and said, "Whatever the Government's decision, he is a great personality". Gadgil said, "Times are changing rapidly and foresighted people are constructively generous". Jayaprakash was released within a few days.

Congress ministers accepted power in provinces in April that year. Kakasaheb insisted on Kher, the then Prime Minister of Bombay State, that all those workers who had gone underground should be assured that they will not be prosecuted. Let them come out. Kher was hesitant and wondered whether even those involved in violence should be given the same treatment. Kakasaheb asked Kher to consult Sardar Patel. Soon the orders were issued. The underground workers came out. A conference of these freedom fighters from Satara and Pune district held at Karad specifically asked Kakasaheb to preside.

In the house, Kakasaheb was appointed member of a select committee to study a bill recommending that India should join and be one of the founder members of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. There was some confusion in the committee and the party about the bill. Kakasaheb was of the firm opinion that since the British were bound to leave soon, it would be of great advantage for free India to join these bodies. It was the persuasive power of Gadgil which made the committee to send in an approving report.

Kakasaheb Gadgil had foresight enough to realise that henceforth Congress members of the central assembly should operate with responsibility since sooner or later they shall have to handle the affairs of free India. His speeches in the Assembly exuded a sense of responsibility. And so when Sir Archibald Rowlands, the Finance

Member of the council, asked him to accept the membership of the Central Pay Commission, he agreed with the consent of Sardar Patel. Gadgil's contribution in preparing the report was substantial.

Meanwhile, the Labour Government in Britain had seen the writing on the wall and had committed itself to leave India. On March 15, Prime Minister Attlee announced that his Majesty's Government recognised India's right to Independence and that no minority shall be allowed to place a veto on the advance of majority. He sent a cabinet mission comprising of Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander to study the situation and formulate definite proposals. The mission arrived in India on March 23, 1946, and immediately launched the exercise. The main problem was finding a common ground between the Congress and the Muslim League.

The tentative scheme the cabinet mission submitted visualised a union government at the centre dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications. There would be three categories of states, each category having its own government in addition to provincial governments below and the central government above. While the Congress accepted the scheme with grave reservations, Jinah obstinately refused. The League wavered and then unleashed the campaign of violence and terror, as referred above, to coerce both the Government and the Congress to give away Pakistan. The dream of Hindu-Muslim unity proved a chimera. With the arrogance, haughtiness and obduracy of the League, the chasm between the two communities had grown wider though there were many sober Muslims who preferred a united India. But their voice was weak and Jinah refused to acknowledge Congress right to speak for the Muslims.

In the intervening period, Jawaharlal Nehru was installed as President of the Congress in deference to wishes of the Mahatma. Lord Wavell invited Nehru to join the interim Government of 14 members and nominate six members. Jinah, who was also invited, refused. The Viceroy then formed the Government without League participation which took office on September 2.

This provoked Jinah to unleash another orgy of violence which shook the country and further fueled the communal hatred. But soon,

Jinah realised that a government dominated by the Congress was of great disadvantage to the League. He relented and entered the Government his nominees taking office on October 26. But within the cabinet the League members acted as a separate team and the administration was in a deadlock. Jinah further instructed that no Muslim League member should take his seat in the constituent assembly. Finally, to thrash out the matter, the British Government invited Nehru and Jinah to London for talks. The exercise was fruitless and Nehru returned home on time to attend the opening of the constituent assembly on December 9, 1946.

As secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party, it was the function of Kakasaheb Gadgil to report to Sardar Patel, the President of the Congress Parliamentary Board, on the happenings in the legislature and outside. Sardar Patel had closely watched Gadgil functioning as the whip and later secretary of the parliamentary party since 1936. He had developed respect for Gadgil on account of the latter's studiousness, discipline, frankness, ability to grasp the issues, parliamentary skill and astuteness in politics. The two would frequently discuss the situation and developments as well as compare their notes. Sardar relied a great deal on Kakasaheb in parliamentary affairs. It was obvious that he had some thing in mind for Kakasaheb. Kakasaheb was in contact with some high ICS officials and on behalf of Sardar Patel, he developed rapport with them for the sake of the future governance.

Sir Gurunath Bewoor, a senior ICS member of the erstwhile Viceroy's council, once called on Gadgil and said some senior ICS officers with interest of free India at their heart, had asked him to arrange a private meeting with Nehru. Jinah had been already mobilising the Muslim officials. Bewoor was asked to see Gadgil to arrange a meeting. Gadgil consulted Vallabhbhai and requested Nehru to attend the meeting. Nehru, a characteristic democrat, was a stickler for parliamentary protocol. He said if the officers wanted it, nothing prevented them from seeing him in his office. The officers wanted a private meeting. Ultimately, it fell on Gadgil to talk to the officers and assuage their feelings. Later, some of them called on Sardar Patel also.

The Constituent Assembly was opened on December 9, 1946. It elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the permanent chairman. According to Gadgil, Sardar Patel preferred Gopalaswamy Iyengar for the post. As chief secretary of the parliamentary party, Gadgil had several discussions with Sardar on the subject and apparently, Gadgil succeeded in convincing that the party would be happy if Dr. Rajendra Prasad was selected for the post. Kakasaheb's contention was that as the secretary of the party, he knew the feelings of the members better than the others.

The main resolution before the Assembly was moved by Nehru and seconded by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Gadgil was the third speaker. The thrust of his speech was that the Constituent Assembly was the nation in action on the march of freedom. This freedom had to be of a sovereign republican nature.

Although the Muslim League members were conspicuous by their absence, the Constituent Assembly began its work smoothly. Gadgil was appointed chairman of the finance committee and submitted the assembly budget subsequently. The non-Congress members, however, were sore with the Congress in spite of the fact that the Congress had adopted the broadest approach in the election of the Constituent Assembly and had placed national interests above the party. According to Kakasaheb, M.R. Jayakar, who spoke the next day, could not appreciate the role of the Congress and made ironic references to it. Dr. Ambedkar was to speak the following day. What he would speak was important. On Shankarrao Deoy's suggestion Kakasaheb invited Dr. Ambedkar for tea that evening along with friends. Kakasaheb and Ambedkar had spent many an hour together in Pune talking and gossiping over tea. 'Nothing could be achieved unless the Muslims and the minorities agreed' Jayakar had said. This was discussed at Kakasaheb's place over tea. Everyone there was serious, earnest and concerned about the situation in the country. The London Conference had convinced Dr. Ambedkar that partition was inevitable and he was preoccupied with its possible effects on the Harijans. But he was farsighted and willing enough to sacrifice his self-esteem. The discussions were frank. Later, when Dr. Ambedkar addressed the Constituent Assembly, the house heard him with rapt and respectful

attention. He spoke with a profound knowledge of world constitutions and of India. His speech was statesmanlike, devoid of bitterness and earnestly challenging. His main points were that the Constituent Assembly must frame the constitution in the interest of the nation as a whole and that it should be acceptable to the generations to come and should unify the country. The speech was greeted with thunderous ovation and he was showered with congratulations in the lobby. The speech had revealed a change in his attitude towards things to come and everybody had noticed it. When members asked him the reason of the change, Dr. Ambedkar remarked in a light banter, "It is the result of Kaka's tea". Rather than the truth, the remark revealed the greatness of his mind and his generosity, Kakasaheb says.

This time Kakasaheb had brought his family to Delhi. During Diwali revellery, Shankarrao Deo participated with the children in bursting the fire crackers and got burnt. Kakasaheb's younger daughter Usha got married to Vasantao Alekar, one of the accused in the Capitol Bomb Case. It was a frugal wedding ceremony with rationing and Kakasaheb's financial position.

One evening in mid-December 1946, Abdul Sattar Seth, Muslim League member of the Assembly, called on Kakasaheb in Delhi. Sattar was a Kachhi Memon who had business in Kerala and was elected from there. He was the Secretary of the League Party and a confidant of Jinah. But he was not a fanatic. Sattar was against partition. He felt it would only benefit the Muslims living in the majority Muslim provinces while the rest of the Muslim would be at the mercy of the Hindus. Sattar told Kakasaheb that the British had definitely promised Pakistan to Jinah. Congress must do something to avoid partition. He suggested that the Congress should come to an agreement with Jinah at whatever cost. Kakasaheb was aware of Jinah's tactics. The experience had been that Congress would make some proposals giving concessions to the League, Jinah would reject them asking for more and if the Congress conceded inflated demands, he would break the negotiations. By this strategy, he had brought Pakistan within his reach. Kakasaheb told Sattar it was now Jinah's turn to take the initiative. The Congress would gladly respond. Kakasaheb then went to Pune for his daughter's wedding. On return to Delhi in January 1947, he

saw Sattar in the Assembly and the lobby. But Sattar did not raise the subject again. Perhaps, he too had reconciled with the idea of a partitioned India.

The year 1947 brought with it the gloomy forebodings of momentous events that shook the sub-continent and ultimately freed India. There was trouble in the country. The Muslim League had closed all doors for reconciliation. Pakistan seemed inevitable. Communal tension had heightened. Gandhiji, who was vehemently opposed to partition and who had said that Pakistan would be created over his dead body, had despaired. Viceroy Lord Wavell had advised the Government that the only solution to Indian problem was for the British to quit India. Britain should announce the day of its departure and, failing any agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims, should impose its own solution. Lord Wavell had also asked to be relieved from the responsibility of India.

Lord Mountbatten replaced Wavell in March 1947 and was charged with the task of transferring power to Indians. The deadline for the operation was set for June 1948 which, later, was advanced to August 15, 1947. On arrival in India, Mountbatten proceeded with his task with clock-like precision, meeting leaders of various hues, discussing alternatives, making proposals, assessing views of different sections of the people. Gadgil had an opportunity to talk to Mountbatten soon after his arrival. In a garden party conventionally given to the assembly members, Mountbatten expressed desire to talk to Gadgil after the party. Without any preliminaries, Mountbatten came to the point. Gadgil got the impression that the Viceroy had almost made up his mind to partition the country.

In the meantime, brutal communal clashes had further widened the cleavage between the League and the Congress. Punjab went up in communal flames, the fire beginning in Lahore and spreading rapidly to Amritsar, Multan and Rawalpindi. That was in March 1947. Bombay and Calcutta too witnessed shameless manifestation of communal hatred and violence. Mahatma Gandhi, shocked and hurt, went to Noakhali in East Bengal to put down flames of communal passions and bring amity. Appeals by the Mahatma, Nehru and Jinnah failed to cool down

the passions. The communal monster had acquired its own volition. There seemed to be no alternative to partition. The British Government approved the plan of partition leaving the Congress and the League to devise details.

The Congress leadership, including Nehru and Patel also came to the sad conclusion that it was better to separate than to live amidst continuous turmoil. On June 3, 1947, Lord Mountbatten, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh broadcast to the nation announcing the approval of the principle of partition. Gandhi, a broken-hearted man with inevitable vivisection of the country and violence of the contending communities, only prayed in agony in Noakhali.

Events moved rapidly. As August 15 approached, the momentous exodus began across the line that was to be the border between two countries born out of a bloody vivisection. Sikhs and Hindus moved from West Punjab to the East and the Muslims moved in reverse direction. Bengal too witnessed a similar exodus. It was the largest mass exodus in the history of mankind and, perhaps, the bloodiest. The birth pangs of the two nations spelt a human holocaust and disaster of horrible magnitude. The joy of freedom was tempered by bloodshed and uncomparable human tragedy.

When the All India Congress Committee met in the third week of June to approve the Mountbatten plan, the atmosphere was that of resigned gloom. Kakasaheb recalls, three or four speeches were made. But these were in the nature of going through a formality. All sang the same tune: Accept whatever is available. The speeches of the Hindu members from Bengal, reflecting anguish and darkness of despair, showed the painful awareness of the destiny which was taking Bengal to a slaughter house. Many of the members sobbed unashamedly when Dr. Chotiram Gidwani spoke expressing the deepest agonies of Sindhi Hindus who were placed as sacrificial goats on the alter of political expediency. Kakasaheb remarks that during his forty years in Congress organisation, it was the only resolution, other than condolence motions, which was approved in total silence.

The approval of the Mountbatten plan, predictably, evoked vituperative criticism against the Congress from many corners,

especially, the Hindu Sabha. In Maharashtra, the provincial Hindu Sabha poured bitter poison, its weekly mouthpieces throwing all norms and decency to winds. Kakasaheb spoke often in public meetings on the inevitability of partition, the forces that led to this situation and the fact that rejection of the plan would postpone freedom by another generation.

As the day of Independence approached, speculation over formation of Independent India's first cabinet became rife in Delhi's political circles. Kakasaheb, as the seniormost member of the parliamentary party, had a claim. But he would not speak his mind. Shankarrao Deo spoke on his behalf to Patel. Shankarrao could not gauge Patel's mind when the latter remarked that everything would be all right. It speaks of Kakasaheb's reticence, dignity and sense of pride that he stopped going to Patel's residence after the announcement of the Mountbatten plan and after it became clear that the new cabinet formation exercise was on. It was his duty as chief secretary of the parliamentary party to report to him every day and he had been doing it ever since he took over the office. After June 3, instead of going to Patel's residence, Kakasaheb would visit the former's room at the Council Hall once every day to report formally. Not that Kakasaheb did not aspire for a cabinet post. He knew it was due to him simply because his performance in the house was good and because he had demonstrated his parliamentary skill and administrative acumen abundantly. But he was a proud man though slightly egoist. He was also an austere man given to frankness and sometimes he spoke more than frankly antagonising the egos of others. He abhorred sychophancy and openly ridiculed those who crawled near Nehru through their parasitic obsequiousness. He had to pay its price. But he would not compromise.

Nor did Kakasaheb join the pilgrimage to Gandhiji and to the residence of Nehru by Congress members seeking berths. All these visits were duly reported in the press and the gossip mills in Delhi churned furiously about prospective cabinet members even as the country was going through its bloodiest period in the history. Many made bold claims. Raosaheb Patwardhan, during the AICC session, congratulated Kakasaheb saying his place in the cabinet was sure.

Kakasaheb requested him to refrain from such observations till appropriate time.

The Constituent Assembly was in session and the Congress Party met every evening to consider the clauses coming for discussion the next day. Nehru, distressed by the growing unrest and riots, had become irritable. On one occasion, he clashed with Pattabhi Sitaramiah, the Congress President, and left the meeting hall in a huff. Kakasaheb and Satyanarayan Sinha ran after him and said that a captain should not abandon the ship even if annoyed with any sailor. "Everything is in tatters", Nehru remarked. Kakasaheb said it was for him to stitch it together. Kakasaheb and Sinha practically dragged him back to the hall. Such were the tempers of Congress leaders in those days of agony and distress.

Kakasaheb, was entrusted with the work of writing the report of the Prison Reforms Committee of the Bombay Government. Members of the Committee had visited all the jails in the province and it was decided to meet in August-September for preparing the outlines of the report. The chairman of the committee was Mangaldas Pakwasa. Normally, the Inspector-General of Prisons, who was also a member of the committee, should have written the report. But Pakwasa wanted Gadgil to write the report. He did it with his usual meticulousness.

On July 31, fifteen days before India was to take its seat in the free world, Nehru called Kakasaheb for a meeting. Kakasaheb knew what it was. He reached Nehru's residence on York Road at the appointed time. Nehru's Secretary, Mathai received him with the remark, "Remember me". This made amply clear what Nehru had in mind. Nehru received him sharp on time and without preliminaries straightaway said, "I want you to join the cabinet".

Kakasaheb recalls, he was not surprised nor was he saddened. There was, no doubt, a feeling of elation. He was aware of the intrigues in the party and the organisation. He knew who was backing which horse. He had kept away from horse trading and political jealousies. According to Kakasaheb, he told Nehru that he was grateful for the offer, But the achievement of freedom was a sufficient reward for him. His life's great ambition was fulfilled and so he would not

misunderstand if Nehru preferred someone else for national or political considerations. He would still continue to work for the party. Nehru said, "You have to accept it. I want you to look after the party organisation and to be my economic adviser along with Rafi". Kakasaheb said, "I am a humble servant and soldier of the Congress. I accept and thank you".

Nehru then asked Kakasaheb what portfolio the latter would prefer. Kakasaheb replied, "You are the captain. You are to tell me whether I should be in the forward line or in the centre or back or keep the goal. I feel I will do my best wherever I am placed!" They parted after coffee and shaking hands. Gadgil reported the development to his mentor, Sardar Patel, immediately.

The fortuitous day of India's Independence was barely a fortnight away. Kakasaheb Gadgil, a self-made man with a lower middle-class background, was going to be one of the ministers in the union cabinet of a free India.

XI

Tryst With Destiny

HECTIC PREPARATIONS WERE on for transfer of power. The British masters, after having ruled the country, in the most civilised manner, were relinquishing power and leaving India for good. They were to leave behind a truncated country and a divided people. Kakasaheb, like countless people and leaders in India, had mixed feelings. Nevertheless, he went about preparing himself for the responsibility he was being entrusted with. He was a man of discipline and believed in doing a good job of whatever task was assigned to him. He read books and discussed with knowledgeable people to understand the working of the secretariat and the union cabinet. Like a humble student, he sought advice from N.M. Joshi of the Servants of India Society, B.G. Kher, the chief minister of Bombay State, and high officials whom he knew. He took his wife and family to Delhi to witness the ushering in of India's freedom and swearing in of the first cabinet. But the family's stay in Delhi was to be a temporary one. Kakasaheb still could not afford financially to keep his family in Delhi even if he was going to be a minister.

On August 14, Kakasaheb went to Delhi airport to see Rajaji off to Calcutta where he was to take over as the Governor of West Bengal. He was a member of the Interim Cabinet since September 2, 1946, and should have continued there. But he was assigned the formidable task of handling the crisis in West Bengal at the time of partition. According to Kakasaheb, Rajaji took him aside and said, 'Your main task in the cabinet will be to see that the two important persons do not fall out'. The reference, obviously, was to the tension between

Nehru and Sardar Patel. By now, it was quite clear that the two men did not see eye to eye on many issues. They were colleagues and had mutual respect. But they differed vehemently on fundamental issues. The long struggle of independence had forced them to bury their differences. But a struggle for a common goal cements the differences. The prospects of ruling the country and conducting the policies of the state had opened the chasm between the two stalwarts. There were differences between the two even about forming the cabinet. But great men as they were, both of them set aside their prejudices and worked together in the interest of the nation.

As stated earlier, in matters of economics and political philosophy, Kakasaheb Gadgil was closer to Nehru. But in domestic matters and pragmatic working of administration, he admired Sardar. Personally, he had established a rapport with the giant leader. But Kakasaheb could not penetrate the inner circle of Nehru and for ever remained at a distance from him though Nehru knew Kakasaheb's worth and the latter's socialistic inclinations. Rajaji knew that Kakasaheb was at an equal distance, politically, from both the stalwarts. He told Rajaji that he was aware of the situation and that he would do his best.

On return from the airport, Kakasaheb was summoned by Nehru and told that he was being given the responsibility of public works and power department. 'The department is rotten with corruption', Nehru told him. 'We hope, you will tidy up the things' Kakasaheb accepted and was immediately designated as Minister for Public Works, Mines and Power.

The transfer of power took place exactly at the stroke of midnight of August 14/15 at the Viceroy's Palace, now Rashtrapati Bhavan, when Viceroy Lord Mountbatten rung down the curtain on nearly 150 years of British rule over India. He announced that transfer of power was now a reality and from that moment he was not the Viceroy of the Emperor of India but the Governor General of the Dominion of India. All his statements and speeches henceforth would have prior approval of the Prime Minister, he declared.

Gadgil took his wife to the glittering central hall to attend the historic occasion. A new chapter in the history of India had begun. Gadgil

was elated to think that he was to be one of those who would shape the destiny of new India.

Nehru spoke in the Constituent Assembly with eloquence and emotion from the depth of his heart:

Long Years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

The toil and turmoil of three decades during which Kakasaheb had sacrificed every moment of his life for the freedom of the nation had borne fruit. In the constituent Assembly, just when it was breaking dawn, every member took the pledge to dedicate himself/herself to the service of India and her people. The next day, the cabinet was sworn in amid the revelry heralding a New India. Anandibai had accompanied Kakasaheb to this formal ceremony. Till then, Kakasaheb had no car of his own. Sardar Patel, who knew of Kakasaheb's predilections, had loaned him a car for a few days. After the swearing in, a formal meeting of the cabinet was held immediately. On returning home, Kakasaheb found that in the excitement, he had forgotten Anandibai and had returned home alone.

At night, news reached Delhi that India's moment of freedom was going through the baptism of fire and blood. City of Lahore was in flames. Men, women and children were being massacred. The cabinet had to act immediately. The first few meetings of the cabinet were mainly devoted to dealing with the situation of communal riots. Refugees fleeing from Pakistan began pouring in Delhi in large numbers. As minister for public works, it was Kakasaheb's responsibility to house them or give them some accommodation. Gadgil suggested that the Government should have a definite plan and policy for the resettlement

of the refugees. The core of the plan was refugees from each district now in Pakistan should be conducted to certain pre-determined districts in India and that refugees from Lahore be resettled in cities like Amritsar and Delhi.

Gadgil worked hard on the job. He set up a regular organisation for resettlement for Greater Delhi in September and provided accommodation to 40,000 refugees within four years. In the initial days, his ministry had to care for literally hundreds of thousands of refugees camping in Delhi.

Kakasaheb Gadgil was in the union cabinet for five years, from August 15, 1947, till the first general elections in 1952. His portfolio was Public Works, Mines and Power. Gadgil's contribution during this period in pushing ahead projects such as Damodar, Bhakra and Koyana, his skill in handling the problems of Greater Delhi, especially during its worst period in recent history, his integrity and candidness, his devotion to work and his studiousness had won him respect among his colleagues and in the bureaucracy.

As Mr. Satya Narayan Sinha, later himself a cabinet minister, wrote, 'As a minister, he (Kakasaheb) proved himself to be an astute and successful administrator. India's freedom came in an atmosphere of turmoil and bloodshed. Kakasaheb looked upon the ministerial post as a medium to ameliorate the woes of the people. As a member of the first cabinet of a free India, he gave great importance to the problems of economic development.... He had to handle the most difficult task of resettling the hundreds of thousands of refugees coming from Pakistan immediately after he took over. While doing so, he also gave thought to the future planning for the capital of the free India and formed perspective schemes of expansion of Delhi and for its water supply'.

Sinha writes, Kakasaheb grasped the fundamental importance of electricity in economic development of the country and strived hard to initiate at least one major hydro-electric power scheme in each of the provinces. It was because of his tireless efforts and encouragement from Nehru that the important schemes such as India's pride at Bhakra, Damodar, Hirakud, Chambal, Koyana and Tungabhadra were surveyed

in record time and launched. These schemes, later, have irrigated hundreds of thousands of hectares and have become a medium for rapid industrialisation.

Kosi in Bihar was considered to be misfortune of that State, Sinha writes. The annual floods of Kosi played a dance of destruction, regularly destroying property and human lives on a large scale. When Sinha drew attention of Kaka towards this problem on behalf of the people of Bihar, the latter personally went down along with the survey teams to Nepal. He arranged for a comprehensive survey of the entire area and launched the integrated scheme of a big dam and barages on the river to control the floods.

Sinha writes, Kakasaheb applied his mind to any task entrusted to him and executed it with full vigour. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the iron man of India, had particular confidence in and affection for Kakasaheb. Kakasaheb ably looked after parliamentary work of Sardar Patel's department when the latter suffered a heart attack. He made a very important contribution in shaping the policy of merger of princely states in sovereign India. Even when he ceased to be a minister, his advice was sought by the Government on matters relating to irrigation and power policies. Pandit Nehru respected Kakasaheb's integrity and efficiency.

M.N. Kaul, former secretary of Lok Sabha, recalls, it was he (Kakasaheb) who as a member of the pay commission, raised with one stroke of the pen the salaries of what we now call class IV servants. He had a strong urge for substantial upward revision of pays of this class. He never liked the system of retinue of domestic servants in the houses of high government officials. Kaul used to hear from him of the struggle that he had to go through with his colleagues and how ultimately managed to have his viewpoint accepted.

Again, it was he (Kakasaheb) who built what are now known as North and South Avenue flats for members of Parliament, Kaul says. He further recalls that when the debates of Parliament were in heavy arrears while it was vital for proper functioning of Parliament that they should come out very early, Kaul suggested a separate parliamentary printing press. With his acute practical sense, Kakasaheb suggested

that instead of having a separate parliamentary press, better have a parliamentary wing of the Government of India Press where priority would be given to publication of parliamentary proceedings and other works of Parliament... The suggestion worked effectively. Kaul cited this instance to show that he had a practical approach and did not take a die-hard attitude.

He (Gadgil) was a man, says Kaul, who would form views on particular administrative matters and where he felt as a minister that he should take steps to enforce those views, his method was not one of controversy and acrimony. That way he felt decisions were never expedited but prolonged. Kaul remembers Kakasaheb once telling him in confidence that there was a particular matter on which he had strong views and felt that any delay was not in public good. He could not get a decision from the then Prime Minister, Nehru. It so happened that the matter came up to him (Kakasaheb) in normal course when Nehru was abroad and Kakasaheb had no hesitation in putting it up in normal course to Sardar Patel who agreed with him and the decision made.

Whether Kakasaheb was a minister or not, his house in Delhi was always the scene of a durbar; durbar not that of an emperor but of a commoner. Here, everybody was given a patient and sympathetic hearing. The poor, more so. There were in the durbar, people from all over India. True, his house was a cultural meeting place for Maharashtrians in Delhi. But he never allowed it to become a parochial gathering. Even so, without losing his all-embracing national image, Gadgil did not hesitate to promote the just interests of Maharashtra in Free India's capital. He took lead in giving shape to the Maharashtra Mandal in Delhi and putting it on even keel. He was not a chauvinist but he was justly proud of his lower-middle class Marathi background and his Maratha heritage. He made it a point to sign the historic document of the Constitution in Modi, the script used for Marathi language till the last century. When the last Viceroy of India, lord Mountbatten, hosted a reception in his palace on the eve of Independence, Kakasaheb attended it in his typical Maharashtrian wear, complete with a traditional shoulder cloth. His wife wore the traditional nine-yard sari.

Kakasaheb was given a sprawling bungalow on Ferozshah Road. He was embarrassed to live in that 'palace' and told Vallabhbhai that he did not require such a huge mansion. Patel remarked that Kakasaheb's house was going to be a dharmashala for all Maharashtrians coming to Delhi and so he needed it. 'You have stayed in jails for long' Patel remarked 'now live in a Mahal'.

As ever, Kakasaheb was perpetually in a tight corner financially. The ministerial salary gave him some relief. The monthly salary was Rs. 5,500/- while he received in hand Rs. 2,900/-after deduction of income tax, house rent, electricity charges and other charges. Kakasaheb was at a loss as to what to do with the equipment allowance of Rs. 3,500/-. Having lived an extremely frugal life in childhood and his prime, Kakasaheb never got accustomed to living in luxury. Among the few concessions he gave to himself was to get stitched a formal dress, as directed by Nehru, on the occasion of inauguration of the Republic on January 26, 1950. On being advised by Rajaji to follow the rules, "I spent two hundred rupees to make this affluent society dress", Gadgil remarks ruefully in his autobiography. The dress consisted of a sherwani, a churidar and a cap. Gadgil recalls with some humour that on the day he went to Parliament in the new dress, the Hindustan Times reported that 'Mr. Gadgil looked the smartest in his new dress'. Nehru showed this to Gadgil the next day. Gadgil remarked wryly, 'this is the first time in fifty years that I have been so complimented and it is going to be the last time. I have broken your monopoly at least for one day'!

By this time, the relationship between Sardar Patel and Gadgil had become like that between a father and son. Kakasaheb's son, Vitthal, wanted to go to Britain to do law. Kakasaheb took Vitthal to Sardar Patel to seek the latter's advice. Patel chided Vitthal, "Why do you want to go? Your father has become wise without going there". But then he advised to send Vitthal. Patel knew of Kakasaheb's financial stringency. Through Patel's good offices, a trust offered Kakasaheb to extend a scholarship for Vitthal for his education abroad. Kakasaheb refused the scholarship without hesitation. He was a minister and felt that his son's education should not be funded by anybody else. He was proud that he educated his son on his own. When he was no longer

in the cabinet for the second term in 1952, the same trust again offered the scholarship. Gadgil stubbornly rejected it. He sold his car bought during the ministership and placed Rs. 10,000 earned from it in a bank account exclusively to finance Vitthal's education.

Kakasaheb essentially was a family man in the lower middle class tradition. Besides his own children, he supported many other relatives and needy young people. He loved his family. Despite his total pre-occupation with the freedom struggle and later with the ministerial responsibilities, he managed to keep the family life happy. This was possible because of total understanding and support from his wife. The freedom struggle and the legal practice had left little leisure for Kakasaheb to enjoy family life. The years between 1930 and 1934 were spent in jail. Then from 1935 to 1939, he was required to spend eight months in a year either in Simla or Delhi to attend the Central Assembly besides going out for Congress sessions and other activities. All along, Anandibai stayed in Pune, looking after the family, educating the children, supporting the relatives and helping out the young freedom activists. Then again, Gadgil was put behind bars between 1940 and 1945 several times. Immediately after his release in 1945, he plunged in electioneering and then went to Delhi. "We were a family without a family life", he remarks. But the family bore its fate cheerfully. Almost on the day Kakasaheb shifted to his new ministerial palace, Anandibai fell ill and took to bed. Within a few days, she was sent away to Pune for better care.

The first week of September 1947 witnessed gruesome butchery in Delhi. When Kakasaheb sent his family back to Pune on September 8, he saw several corpses lying on the roads and at the station. By the end of that month, Gadgil, while returning to Delhi from a visit to Koyana dam site, went to Pune to see his wife. Anandibai had further weakened. She wanted to go to Delhi but she was ill and could not go. Finally, determined to spend her last days with her husband, Anandibai went to Delhi in November. Gadgil had bought a second-hand car by then from the loan given by the Government. Anandibai was too emaciated to walk. She had to be carried out of the station and into the house. The call of duties would not allow Gadgil to spend much time with her. But he did read to her from scriptures regularly.

The work required him to attend the office often from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. The household was always full of visitors and guests. The Government was passing through a crisis and Anandibai was sinking. Her health deteriorated progressively. In March 1948, doctors advised that she should be removed to Panchgani for convalescence. Gadgil left with ailing wife and children on April 2. Anandibai further sank on reaching Bombay. She could not travel to Pune and the family stayed in Bombay. On April 12, Kakasaheb had to go to Rewa for inauguration of Vindhya Union. He left early in the morning by a special plane, attended the function, held the necessary talks with the local leaders and returned to Bombay in the evening. In the pre-dawn hours of the next morning, Anandibai died peacefully. Her funeral was attended by a large number of people. Obviously not merely because Gadgil was a minister. Anandibai was a quiet woman devoted to her husband. She was not only a loyal follower in Kakasaheb's political belief, but was also an activist in her own right. She contested the Pune Municipal Council election from women's constituency and lost. But she was made a candidate not on account of her husband. In fact Kakasaheb was reluctant. There were few other candidates willing to contest and the choice of the party fell on her. She helped political activists during the national struggle at the cost of her own household often parting with her ornaments, jewellery and money which her house badly needed. She never complained about Gadgil's hectic pace of activities, his frequent absences from home and forays into the jails. It was because of her loyal and uncomplaining support that Kakasaheb could freely devote himself to his life's mission. Her loss was a great blow to him and he found it difficult to recover from it. Anandibai had left a large family behind. The flow of visitors and guests continued unabated. Even when she was dying in Bombay a number of guests had camped in Gadgil's residence in Delhi. They were being well looked after by the trained staff left behind. Kakasaheb could not stay in Pune longer to brood over the tragedy. Duty called him to Delhi.

XII

Era of Consolidation

AS MINISTER FOR Public Works, Mines and Power, in the first cabinet after independence, Kakasaheb Gadgil had to work on several fronts. Being a confidant of Sardar Patel, the latter used to entrust many delicate political tasks to him. In cabinet meetings, he was outspoken never fearing to incur the wrath of the leaders nor hiding his true opinions in order to save his chair. In fact, as he has recorded, Gadgil had offered to resign more than once simply because he had a difference of opinion on certain matters with Nehru. That Nehru promptly dismissed his letters offering to resign speaks eloquently of Nehru's greatness of mind and democratic spirit.

Kakasaheb went about methodically in resettling the Hindu refugees coming from Pakistan. He tried to resettle refugees from East Bengal in Andaman islands. He also devised the scheme to resettle refugees in Dandakaranya. The scheme, later proved not very successful because the Bengalee refugees were not willing to live there.

When the question of India becoming a member of Commonwealth came for discussion in the cabinet, Kakasaheb opposed it on the ground that like the oath of loyalty, India might be tied to the foreign policy of Britain. Vallabhbhai spoke to him for about an hour to persuade him. But Kakasaheb stuck to his view and recorded his dissent when the proposal was approved. But later, he had the honesty to confess that the decision had proved advantageous to India.

When the history of accession of 600 princely states to India within years of the country gaining freedom would be recorded, Kakasaheb

Gadgil's role, however small it is, in standing firmly by the side of Sardar Patel and helping him out in shaping the policy and executing it in many details would have to be acknowledged. The Independence of India Act of July 1947 abrogated all the treaties between the princes and the King of Britain. This made all the 600 princes ruling their principalities virtually sovereign in theory. To begin with, they were to be persuaded to sign an instrument of accession to the Indian Union before August 15, 1947, which made the Government of India responsible for foreign affairs, defence, customs, foreign trade and currency, the question of merger was to be taken up later. Sardar Patel was in sole charge of the affairs pertaining to the Princely states. The Princes signed the instrument in rapid succession. But the states of Junagarh, Kashmir, Bhopal and Hyderabad refused on various grounds. Existence of a large number of sovereign states within India would negate India's sovereignty, it was feared. Kakasaheb described the situation aptly. He said that the freedom looked like the robe of honour given to a learned man with six hundred holes in it.

The Nawab of Junagarh, situated in the heart of Kathiawad, joined Pakistan. The situation was problematic. Sardar Patel advised launching a people's movement which could be supported by the Government. On his advice, Samaldas Gandhi, a veteran freedom fighter, organised a march of people from Rajkot to Junagarh. A contingent of army followed to protect the marchers. The Nawab fled to Pakistan. On October 31, 1947, Kakasaheb Gadgil was present at Junagarh when Sardar Patel sought the verdict of the people in a mammoth meeting. The state thus joined the Union of India without bloodshed.

Kakasaheb also worked hard in constituting the federated State of Saurashtra with the merger of 342 princely states of various sizes. Under the direction of Sardar Patel, Gadgil worked with V.P. Menon to frame the constitution of the new state. Thus Gadgil made his humble contribution in nursing the birth of Saurashtra and expediting the events in Junagarh.

When the Kashmir problem flared up and Srinagar was in danger of falling to Pakistani marauders in the third week of October, 1947, Sheikh Abdullah came to Delhi to seek military help. The cabinet

approved Mountbatten's plan of sending troops to Kashmir valley within fifteen minutes. Each member of the cabinet set to the allotted task in support of the cabinet decision to help Kashmir. Kakasaheb Gadgil worked overnight with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai.

The army rushed to Kashmir and saved the situation. The Jammu-Pathankot Road was in shambles and could not take traffic in monsoon. That was a dangerous situation where the Pakistani troops could block the communication and cut off the Kashmir valley from India. As minister for public works, Kakasaheb Gadgil was assigned in the last week of October the task of building the 65-mile road before July 1948. It was a formidable challenge since the road had to be built in a hilly terrain across rivers and rivulets spanning vallies and mountains. When Gadgil hesitated saying that it was defence ministry's job, Sardar told him simply, 'You have to do it'. Gadgil accepted the challenge.

That evening on returning home, Kakasaheb called a meeting of secretaries at his residence and told them what was to be done. The secretary and the chief engineer protested saying the rivers in the area flooded in monsoon and that the task could not be completed within the time schedule prescribed. They advised Gadgil not to accept the responsibility. Gadgil firmly said that it had to be done and that he had promised to do it.

Within an hour, Gadgil managed with the help of the officers to prepare a time-bound plan and a scheme cutting through all red tapes. He got sanctioned a budget of two crore rupees and appointed a special financial adviser for the job. Gadgil had told the officers that he had decided to travel on the new road in the first week of July and dine in the Jammu palace.

Gadgil and his team worked without rest. Of the 65 miles of the road, eleven consisted of bridges, three major one and several medium and short ones. Within a fortnight, the required steel parts for the bridges, were obtained and carried. Within days, several special trains were mobilised to carry goods to Pathankot for the purpose. The road at some points passed within four miles of Pakistan border and so army security had to be provided for labourers. Gadgil tried to mobilise the refugees squatting in the area to work for the bridge on assured daily

wages. But since none of them was willing to work, he arranged for bringing in nearly ten thousand labourers from Rajasthan by special trains. On Gadgil's insistence, armed sentries were posted at every hundred yards and a picket post at every twenty-five miles. Labourers were put up in camps and the work began on 24-hour basis with floodlights to help during the nights. Gadgil moved among the labourers to encourage them. He organised dispensaries, mobile cinemas and markets for their daily necessities. During the peak working period, the labour force amounted to forty thousand.

Kakasaheb Gadgil had insisted that no work should be given away on contract. This had naturally upset interested contractors and their political mentors in Pathankot. Some leaders tried to incite people and warned Gadgil that the people had become restive and might cause trouble. Instead of heeding to their pleas of opening up some works for contractors, Gadgil organised a public meeting in Pathankot where he explained the importance of the project to the people. "The work on this road is vital to the defence of the country", he told the mammoth public meeting. "If any of you have any grievances, a complaint box has been kept for anyone to put his complaint in. I shall open it on July 8 and investigate each grievance. Those found guilty would be punished, but the work on the road must not be interrupted now. A wise traveller does not fight with the boatman in midstream. Let us cross the river and then we can take care of the boatman".

The speech received a thunderous ovation from the people and made the vested interests nervous. Kakasaheb Gadgil did not stop at this. He arranged with the local magistrate to declare the area where the vital road was being built as a 'protected area'. Thereafter, there was no hindrance from this section and the construction work went on smoothly. But in the third week of May 1948, support pillars of a bridge across river Ravi were washed away in floods. Kakasaheb went to Pathankot on hearing the news and called a meeting of the officers and engineers. He congratulated them for the work done and said, "The final victory is near. Only a hundred feet of bridge over Ravi is to be completed. You are experts, inventive and efficient. Find a way to complete the bridge before July 1".

The chief engineer present there said engineers planned to build a hanging bridge for the time being and complete the masonry bridge after the monsoon. But Gadgil's pledge would be fulfilled. A British engineer, Major General Williams of the Military Engineering services, quite impressed by the feat accomplished, said in admiration, "Your boys have done it. They have done the impossible. I had said it couldn't be done in time. I take back my words".

The road was inaugurated by Nehru on July 7 as promised. On the advice of commander-in-chief, Nehru could not traverse the road for security reasons. So he opened the road in a ceremony at Pathankot and flew to Shrinagar. Kakasaheb went by jeep to Jammu by the new road opening two major bridges on the way and a commemorative stone tablet bearing his name. As promised to himself, he lunched at the jammu palace on that day. The inauguration of the strategic road attracted world-wide attention and the Indian engineers and Indian organising skill was commended. The accounts of the work were presented to Parliament in time. The road became the life-line between Kashmir valley and Jammu and served the vital strategic purpose for the army.

As for the main problem of Kashmir, Kakasaheb had strong opinions of his own and he expressed them in the cabinet without reservation. But Kashmir, being in external affairs portfolio was taken care of by Nehru personally. Neither Sardar Patel nor Gadgil could interfere with it.

Hyderabad was a different proposition. It was a landlocked state at the very centre of Indian Union and Pakistan was far away from it. The Nizam of Hyderabad refused to sign the instrument of accession and began dreaming of maintaining his empire as a sovereign state. After Independence the Razakar atrocities increased. According to Gadgil, Nizam was seeking to find an outlet to the sea and had planned to acquire Goa. Gadgil was of the firm opinion that Hyderabad should be partitioned and made no secret of this.

Mountbatten, who was still the Governor General, once called Kakasaheb and asked him why the latter was so much against the Nizam. The state would fall into your lap like a ripe fruit, he said.

Kakasaheb replied that India must retain its lap by the time the fruit fell. Hyderabad was a historic perversion and a dagger in the heart of India, he said.

In March 1948, Sardar Patel suffered a heart attack and was forced to work from home. Since then, Kakasaheb had to look after Patel's parliamentary duties like replying to questions, moving bills and making statements for the home and state ministries. So Gadgil had to study the problem of the princely states in detail and handle the day to day affairs. In Patel's absence, it was Kakasaheb who inaugurated the Matsya Sangh of the himalayan states and the states of Vindhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Sardar Patel was pleased with his work and with his speeches made on the occasion of inauguration of these states. He often involved Kakasaheb in policy making meetings of his departments.

Thus Kakasaheb was called by Patel to Mussoorie, where he was resting in May 1948, for consultations on Hyderabad tangle. Defence minister Baldev Singh, Major General Chaudhari and Defence Secretary H.M. Patel were also called for the meeting. Before the consultations began, Kakasaheb reported to Patel on the situation in Hyderabad. He expressed his fear that Mountbatten wanted the Nizam to continue as head of Hyderabad State. Gadgil insisted in the meeting that a compromise on Hyderabad would only perpetuate the problem. It must be tackled with despatch. If not, the whole country would again be engulfed in communal riots.

In the formal meeting, Gadgil did most of the talking under Patel's instructions. "We will have to move the army into Hyderabad. Give us the appropriate date", Gadgil told General Chaudhari. The General suggested the action should be taken either before July 1 or after the monsoon. The necessary arrangements for administration after the army entered were discussed. Meanwhile, the cabinet discussed a plan under which elected ministers would take offices in Hyderabad. But the plan stipulated equal representation to the Hindus and Muslims, an anomaly in view of the actual population complexion in the state. Moreover, Nizam would be permitted to keep an army of 20,000 in the State. Gadgil voted against its acceptance. He suspected that the plan was inspired by Mountbatten. He was told that Patel was in favour

of the plan. But Kakasaheb refused to oblige saying he would not accept the plan whatever the opinion of Patel. Kakasaheb records in his autobiography that none of the ministers would speak up against this plan.

Even this plan was not accepted by the Nizam because of opposition from the Razakars whose leader, Quasim Rizvi, had unleashed a reign of terror fomenting Hindu-Muslim animosity even outside the state. He had declared that he would unfurl the flag of Nizam over the Red Fort of Delhi. In the meantime, Mountbatten was replaced by Rajagopalachari as the Governor General of India. Rajaji wanted to go to Hyderabad to persuade Nizam. Gadgil said Rajaji could not go there as the Governor General.

Nizam had given international dimension to the problem by appealing to the United Nations. The question was to come before the U.N. assembly in the third week of September. India was under tremendous international pressure. Mountbatten, although he had gone back home, was bearing pressure on Nehru to compromise with Nizam. Nehru, always sensitive to communal issues and a believer in the sanctity of international forums, hesitated. The British commander-in-chief of Indian army advised not to touch Hyderabad till Kashmir problem was settled. It was a complex situation. Patel feared that once the problem went to the United Nations, it would keep on hanging and would remain a sore spot in the heart of India. All along these developments, Kakasaheb stood firmly with the ailing Patel canvassing speedy action against the Nizam. The preparations for Hyderabad action were made by the end of August 1948 in secrecy.

However, at one time it appeared as if India was developing cold feet with the prospects of the issue being raised in the United Nations. Kakasaheb who heard reports that Hyderabad action might be postponed in view of this wrote to Nehru again urging urgent action. He spoke to Patel several times and was reassured that Patel would not budge from his resolve. While Patel was steady on his course, Kakasaheb, though a junior colleague, raised all kinds of doubts and fears lest the plan be thwarted. On September 11, Kakasaheb, on Patel's permission, addressed a mammoth public meeting in Delhi on the issue

of Hyderabad where he assured the people that the Government was seized of the matter and urged them to not to believe in rumours. He also advised people to keep peace. The atrocities of the Razakars had caused tension all over the country.

That night, an anxious Sardar Patel spoke to Kakasaheb several times on telephone. At 9.30 in the evening, Patel was called by the Governor General. News had reached that Jinah had died and Kakasaheb feared that this might lead to postponement of the Hyderabad action. A postponement meant further complications, he feared, and expressed his opinion strongly to Patel before the latter went to the Governor's palace. On returning from there, Patel told Gadgil on the telephone that Rajaji did discuss with him the possibility of cancelling the action because of Jinah's death. However, Patel had turned it down saying that the army was already poised to enter Hyderabad and that the action had nothing to do with Jinah's death. According to the plan, next morning of September 12, 1948, the radio announced the army had entered Hyderabad from four sides. The Nizam's forces surrendered in three days.

As for the Maratha state of Kolhapur in Maharashtra, Kakasaheb had been actively supporting the people's movement there for a long time. But many in the state wanted the Maratha rule to be continued and worked for that objective. A popular ministry took over there a few days after Independence. The state merged into the Indian union in 1950. The other smaller states in Maharashtra, Phaltan, Bhore, Sangli, Miraj and Aundh merged in the union in quick succession.

Some leaders in Maharashtra had supported the idea of forming a Deccan States' Union. Gadgil was firmly opposed to the idea and expressed his opposition frequently. "Thus the holes in the freedom's robe of honour were darned and repaired", says Kakasaheb. About his own contribution, he says, "I was but a humble assistant sewing buttons in the shop of the great tailor, Vallabhnbhai".

XIII

In the Service of the People

THE FIRST FEW years of freedom were painful both personally for Kakasaheb Gadgil and for the country. He lost his wife. He still had four unmarried daughters on hand, the last one being hardly one year old. Within two months he married to a distant sister of his departed wife on May 10, 1948. He did consult his family before making a decision. The marriage caused a controversy in Pune newspapers. But in the long run, he could record that the decision was correct and that the second marriage helped him keep the family intact and look after the young children well. Kakasaheb was a person steeped in democratic spirit. He did not take a hasty step without consulting his young daughters and sons, giving equal weight to every opinion expressed. Some of his relations had requested Sardar Patel to intervene and prevent the marriage. Patel left it to the good judgement of Kakasaheb saying the latter would not do wrong.

Gandhiji's violent death shocked the nation and the world. The stories of atrocities on Hindus in Pakistan, Indian leadership's desperate efforts to prevent repercussions in India and to maintain Hindu-Muslim amity, Pakistan's cruelly selfish efforts to exploit this weakness in India through clever diplomatic moves, the concessions which India conceded to Pakistan in quick succession—all these developments had upset and inflamed the passions of the Indian youths, particularly those fed by Hindu Sabha propaganda. In this atmosphere, charged with hatred, Gandhiji had insisted that India should pay Pakistan Rs. 50 crores as agreed earlier. The Indian cabinet's objection was that Pakistan owed to India Rs. 300 crores. But Pakistan had succeeded

through clever propaganda in creating an impression that India was going back on its promise. Gandhiji's insistence had further worsened the situation. Gandhi had been an anathema in Pune for a long time. Nathuram Godse, who shot at Gandhiji on January 30 1948, was a Brahmin youth from Pune.

With this, the Brahmin-non-Brahmin feud in Maharashtra burst out again. Jedhe was in Delhi living with Kakasaheb at that time. Both felt helpless. The two together had combed Maharashtra from 1935 to destroy the poisonous weeds of the Brahmin-non-Brahmin syndrome. The riots in the rural areas of Maharashtra following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, especially the attacks on the Brahmins and burning of their homes and properties, had almost undone what Gadgil and Jedhe had tried to do. They had brought in the Satyashodhak followers in the Congress movement. The 1942 prati sarkar in Satara district had taken a revolutionary tinge. The murder of the Mahatma created a precarious social crisis in Maharashtra where reactionary social trend was gaining ground.

Kakasaheb requested B.G. Kher, the then chief minister of Bombay state to convene a meeting of the Congress workers in Bombay. The meeting of the Congress Parliamentarians, legislators and workers was held in the Council Hall by the end of February. Many people spoke analysing the situation and sometimes indulging in allegations and counter-allegations. Kakasaheb spoke at the request of Jedhe. He told the meeting not to waste time on post-mortem. The corpse of the social schism must be buried quickly. Let a new Maharashtra be born out of the turbulence. He suggested that those arrested for indulging in rioting should be released. Those arrested following Gandhiji's murder but had no connection with the dastardly act should also be let out. Compensations should be paid to those whose property was destroyed in the caste riots.

Kher agreed to this and within two months took action to fulfil the promise. The remaining cases were cleared by Mr. Y.B. Chavan when he became the chief minister of linguistic Maharashtra state in May 1960.

In a meeting of the Governors in February 1948, Kakasaheb stressed the need to handle the situation carefully and not to aggravate the tensions by vengeful measures. Sardar Patel, who had lost heart after the Mahatma's murder, had specifically asked Gadgil to attend this meeting. The conference was to decide the policy of the government in regard to Hindu Sabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In the subsequent cabinet meeting, Gadgil pleaded that while those guilty of the murder should be severely punished, leaders of political parties should not be victimised. He explained the social and political environment in Maharashtra. He was in favour of banning the RSS if enough evidence was found to reveal its activities. But he pleaded that the Hindu Sabha be treated differently. The RSS was subsequently banned.

Sardar Patel's death on December 15, 1950, was another big blow to Kakasaheb. Kakasaheb had a great respect for Patel's pragmatism and human piety. Patel and Nehru had differed on the Government's policy towards Pakistan and the Muslims in India. Kakasaheb had vigorously supported Patel's line. Both of them were against giving undue concessions to Pakistan and the Muslims in India. Kakasaheb promoted the view that those Muslims who had chosen to stay behind in India and were loyal to this nation must never be discriminated against. Nor should they be made target of revenge in retaliation of Pakistani treatment of its minorities. At the same time, Kakasaheb felt that pampering of Muslims in India would lead to further cleavage and complications. After the partition, all the citizens of India should be treated equally. He expressed his views vehemently and shared them with Patel. Nehru was not happy with Patel on this account. Kakasaheb was considered to belong to Sardar Patel's group. According to Kakasaheb, there was no such group. And indeed, Kakasaheb differed with Patel vehemently on questions of economic policies and foreign affairs. After Gandhiji murder, the chasm between Nehru and Patel had widened.

Patel called Kakasaheb to his house on December 11, 1950, a day before he left Delhi. The iron man of India was frail and sinking. According to Gadgil, Patel sought a promise from the former. Kakasaheb gave his word of honour. Patel then told Gadgil not to desert

Panditji whatever the differences of opinion. Kakasaheb says he followed this promise even after Panditji's death despite the fact that he differed with Nehru on many issues. Kakasaheb made no secret of these differences and had offered to resign from the cabinet on more than one occasion. When Sardar lived, he wanted that Kakasaheb and his family should visit his house at least once a month. Kakasaheb consulted Sardar Patel almost daily and sought advice from him on vital issues. He had no such close relationship with Nehru although Kakasaheb recalls that Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, occasionally invited his children to the Prime Minister's house. In Sardar Patel, Kakasaheb had lost his mentor. But he did not change his views nor did he make any efforts to ingratiate himself with Nehru to keep his position by compromising what he believed was his honest stand.

Whenever Kakasaheb made proposals regarding Pakistan, Nehru reacted as if Gadgil was an enemy of the Muslims. Despite this, Gadgil always pressed Nehru to take a firm stand in regard to Kashmir and other disputes with Pakistan. Nehru used to say that politics should always be flexible. Gadgil would tell him that if he did not take a firm stand somewhere he would get no time even to admit his mistakes. This clash of temperaments increased when in 1949 atrocities on Hindus in East Pakistan increased. Kakasaheb Gadgil was of the opinion that it was imperative for India in this situation to intervene and help the Hindus in East Pakistan. The cabinet discussed the issue and decided that some action should be taken. But Pakistan started negotiations with British as mediators and the plan of action was abandoned.

Pakistani Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali, came to India in March 1950 and held talks with Nehru. As a sequel, Nehru one day placed before the cabinet a draft of his agreement with Liaquat Ali for acceptance. Kakasaheb was not sure whether Sardar Patel was consulted on the draft. The agreement accepted the principle of reservation for Muslims in proportion to their population in all the services and representative bodies in the constituent states of India. Similar provisions were suggested for the Central Government. Kakasaheb opposed this provision saying that the relevant paragraphs nullified the whole philosophy of the Congress. The country had paid the price of partition

as a result of agreeing to separate electorates on communal lines before Independence. The draft meant drinking the same poison again and forgetting the history.

Kakasaheb records that no one spoke at the cabinet meeting though several seemed to be pleased with his observations. Nehru, however, was displeased. The discussion continued for about half an hour at the end of which Gopalswami Aiyangar said that there was substance in Gadgil's objections. He volunteered to redraft the relevant provisions.

Kakasaheb insisted that the two paragraphs with objectionable provisions must go lock, stock and barrel. Nehru was angry and said he had agreed to this with Liaquat Ali. Gadgil said plainly, "You must have told him that the agreement could be finalised only after the Cabinet's approval. I cannot speak of the other Cabinet members, but I am opposed to it hundred percent". On Sardar Patel's suggestion, the discussion was postponed till the next day and the meeting was adjourned.

That night, Sardar Patel called Gadgil for discussion. Kakasaheb again put forth his point strongly. He insisted that Vallabhbhai must speak plainly now, otherwise complications would follow and the country would have to repent. The country had decided upon a secular government. The agreement destroyed that conception. Later that night, Sardar Patel sent him the papers regarding revisions suggested by Gopalswami in the draft and his disapproval of them. Kakasaheb noted his agreement with Patel and sent the papers back. In the next day's cabinet meeting, the two controversial paragraphs were omitted from the agreement. Kakasaheb records with satisfaction that if he took credit for saving India from the evil of repetition of separate electorates, reservation in services and in the ministries, that was justifiable.

Thus when the Union Cabinet was to be reconstituted following India becoming a Republic, it was rumoured that Nehru would drop Gadgil from the new cabinet. But Nehru did not do so and Kakasaheb stayed, obviously because of support from Sardar Patel, Kakasaheb acknowledges. Similarly on the question of devaluation of rupee in

1949 and in river water dispute with Pakistan, Kakasaheb took adamant stance antagonising Nehru.

After the next general elections, Kakasaheb was relieved by Nehru from ministership. But Nehru continued to have warm respect for Kakasaheb. P.S. Patke, an official in the Prime Minister's secretariat, recalls that Nehru immensely liked Gadgil's fearlessness. Many stalwarts who came to see Nehru, first ascertained from the staff about the mood of the Prime Minister before meeting him. They used to be nervous before calling on him. But not so with Kakasaheb. He was always his usual self, fearless and candid. He had nothing to hide nor a desire to please and humour. After his retirement from the cabinet, Kakasaheb walked on the streets of Delhi as he had no car of his own. Nehru once saw this and was greatly upset. He asked Patke, "Why does Kaka walk on foot?" Patke told him that Kakasaheb had bought a car during his ministership by borrowing money. Now he had sold the car.

Nehru was disturbed. He began telling everybody, "I saw today Kaka walking on foot. I am hurt". He then went out of the way to offer to Kakasaheb to choose any post, without compromising his principles and dignity, which would afford him a bungalow to live in and a car. Kakasaheb had to be persuaded a lot. Finally, he accepted the chairmanship of the Indian Institute of Public Administration.

Nehru had offered him the Governorship at the time of formation of the new cabinet after the 1952 elections. But Kakasaheb had refused on the ground that if he accepted that post, he would have to resign his seat in the Lok Sabha and that way he would betray the confidence his voters had reposed in him. He also declined Deputy Chairmanship of Planning Commission on the same grounds. He would not accept any post that would require him to compromise in this regard. Finally, he accepted the Governorship of Punjab only after he was defeated in the 1956 elections and no longer represented a constituency.

Kakasaheb Gadgil was better known for his political acumen, his rapport with the non-Brahmin masses, his habit of plain speaking which also caused controversies because he spoke very plainly and bluntly, some sections also regarded him as boastful. But very little is known

about Kakasaheb's administrative acumen, his organisational skill, the thrust and drive he gave to the departments he handled, his skill in handling the bureaucracy and his will to get things done for the people through the Government machinery. He handled his departments with care, devotion, understanding and with characteristic meticulousness. While paying attention to every detail of the work in hand, he did not lose sight of the overall perspective. Often he was accused of poking his nose in other departments. He did so not because he liked to do it but because he always had a broad picture of Independent India before him. The Cabinet was collectively responsible for governing India well and so every cabinet member had a right to know about issues in departments other than those held by him, Kakasaheb believed. And so he freely expressed himself in cabinet meetings on subjects ranging from foreign affairs to industries and finance. He had an eye for finance and had worked in many committees which decided on complex economic policies. Perhaps, the first few years of Independent India were so turbulent and political events so overwhelming, that the foundations laid by the tall men in the first cabinet for the prosperous and strong India of future are easily glossed over. Kakasaheb was among those men of vision who put his soul in building the modern India and should share the honours for the feats accomplished by this infant nation during those trying years.

To begin with, Kakasaheb's department was also entrusted with handling the problems of resettlement of the refugees from Pakistan and management of the public distribution system. His role in resettling the refugees in different parts of India is described earlier. As for the availability of essential commodities, oil and other industrial raw material was concerned, India was passing through a very critical period. Special trains had to be arranged for the movement of petrol and salt during the first days of independence.

As minister for public works, mines and power, Gadgil vigorously pushed ahead major irrigation and power schemes. The first scheme he launched immediately after the Independence Day was that of Damodar Valley Project. On a request from the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr Prafulla Ghosh, he presented a scheme to the cabinet in the month of August, 1947. The Accountant General of India raised

some questions about financing the project, Gadgil said the project had to be taken in hand. As to the question of financing it, time would sort out the problem. Nehru and other ministers agreed to the project. And Kakasaheb Gadgil drafted the Damodar Valley Corporation bill and duly moved it in the November session of Parliament which referred it to a select committee. By March, the bill was passed having been piloted by Gadgil with vigour and commitment. The members from Bengal and Bihar, the states which were to benefit from the project, were so pleased that they presented an autographed copy of the bill to Kakasaheb as a token of their gratitude. "When the question of selecting the members of the board came, Gadgil insisted that the selection should be made by the senior ministers and not by himself alone. Thus when the newspapers criticised that Gadgil had selected a relative of Mrs Sucheta Kripalani as the chairman of the board, Kakasaheb could easily rebut it and the concerned newspaper had to publish an apology.

At the time of Independence, India produced hardly one million KW of electricity and it was imperative that the country should speedily increase its power generation. Production of power as also irrigation of land was Kakasaheb's responsibility. By November 1947, he had prepared a programme with the help of the department under which each province would have at least one big hydro-electrical project. Accordingly, Kakasaheb pushed for Damodar in West Bengal and Bihar, Hirakud in Orissa, Kosi in Bihar, Bhakra in Punjab, Koyna in Maharashtra, Tapi in Gujarat, Nagarjunsagar in the then Madras, Tungabhadra in Mysore and Chambal in Madhya Pradesh. The Central Power and Water Commission was reorganised.

Gadgil took initiative in thrashing out the preliminary problems in getting the Hirakud project accepted by the princely states in Orissa. With electric speed he thrashed out an agreement under which the massive project would be executed by the Government of India. An advisory board was formed without delay and the work was launched immediately.

Bhakra, the pride of India, was taken up next. It was under Kakasaheb's dynamic guidance, with his eye for details and his capacity

to make quick decisions that the work on the project got under way quickly. Gadgil took personal interest, visited the site much before the actual work started, thrashed out the problems with the princely states, created the Bhakra Control Board and called special experts and advisers from abroad to help in this unique project.

Gadgil showed his acumen at diplomacy during the dispute between India and Pakistan over the waters of Punjab rivers. According to the Radcliffe Award, the waters of Sutlej and Ravi belonged exclusively to India while Pakistan had the benefit of the three other major rivers. Kakasaheb was firm and unyielding when Pakistan fumed and protested at India's action in curtailing Sutlej water supply from Ferozepur Barrage. Nehru, being a thorough gentleman, always tended to take a human approach to Pakistani problems. Knowing this, Pakistani leaders cunningly exploited Nehru's humanity and sense of fair play. Pakistan approached Nehru who in turn asked Gadgil to hold a conference.

The conference met in Gadgil's office in May 1948 he being the chief delegate. His advisers were Gopalswamy Aiyangar and Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Pakistani team was led by Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammad. The Pakistani point was that the river agreement was not binding while Kakasaheb's theme was the economic consequences of partition must be accepted by both the sides. The talks dragged on and were on the point of breaking up when Gadgil offered to accommodate Pakistan for five years. Till that time, India would gradually reduce the supply of waters and Pakistan should make alternative arrangements. Dr Ambedkar did not like the proposal. Aiyangar liked it. When Ghulam Ali hesitated, Gadgil promptly withdrew the offer. Later Nehru asked on telephone why the talks had broken down. Gadgil explained that the offer of five year's accommodation was not accepted by Pakistan. Nehru said now it was acceptable to them.

The draft that emerged following Nehru's consultation did not mention any time limit. Gadgil, when shown the proposal, refused to sign it. Nehru explained that if water was stopped, the people of Pakistan would suffer and India had no quarrel with them. Gadgil

agreed but remarked that the Pakistan people would realise that their own government was responsible for their miseries only after water was stopped. Nehru said he too would not sign the agreement if Gadgil did not. Ultimately, Gadgil had to sign under pressure but not without having a clause which provided for another meeting within six months to work out details.

As the talks protracted with Pakistan refusing to accept a deadline, it began building a barrage on Sutlej miles north of Ferozepur, which, on completion, would divert the whole of Sutlej waters to Pakistan rendering Ferozepur barracks useless and the Ganga canal a mockery. Pakistan had cunningly used the time lost in fruitless negotiations. When apprised of this danger, Kakasaheb told his officers that India could not possibly prevent Pakistan from building that barrage as that was within Pakistan's right. But there must be some effective countermeasures.

The engineering expert, Khosla came up with a suggestion. Further ten miles up the Pakistani site of barrage, Sutlej and Beas met at Harike on the Indian side. India could build a barrage there and join the Ganga canal with it by a new canal. The scheme also envisaged building a new Rajasthan canal which would irrigate three million acres in Rajasthan. Without losing time, Gadgil immediately approved the plan and instructed that the work should begin forthwith, if possible, the next day. He promptly sanctioned one crore rupees from his ministry and told the officers only to inform the finance ministry of the plans and obtain a formal sanction but not to ask for any funds at the time. He suggested that the finance ministry officials should be taken into confidence and tactfully explained the importance and urgency of the work.

Gokhale, the secretary of Gadgil's ministry, accomplished this task within an hour and the actual work on the barrage began within a week. Pakistani newspapers raised a hue and cry but India was within her rights. It was only after a few months that Nehru noticed the controversy and asked Gadgil what this Harike Barrage project was about. When Gadgil explained, Nehru said he should have been informed. Gadgil replied he did not think it was proper to bother Nehru

unnecessarily. It could be proper to consult him only if there was some difficulty. Thus Harike Barrage project effectively checkmated Pakistan's cunning designs. Pakistan was enraged.

A subsequent incident in connection with the same water dispute, as narrated by Kakasaheb himself, shows the largeness of Nehru's heart. Despite the agreement on reduction of water going towards Pakistan, that country failed to make alternative arrangements and instead resorted to threats saying it would take the matter to the Security Council. Nehru called a meeting to discuss Pakistani note. The Governor of Punjab, the concerned Punjab ministers and officials, Gadgil and his officers and Rajaji were present. Gadgil produced a draft of the note replying to Pakistan's threat. Nehru did not like the draft and said that India should be generous to the people of Pakistan. Gadgil remarked generosity should evoke gratitude. The Punjab ministers were happy with Gadgil's firm stance but were not bold enough to challenge Nehru's contention. Nehru asked angrily whether he had any rights as a Prime Minister. Gadgil replied that Nehru had all the rights under the constitution and that he (Gadgil) had nothing to say against them. "But as a member of the cabinet working on the principle of joint responsibility, I too have a right to say what I feel about the matter under discussion and that is what I am doing".

Nehru got angrier and asked whether he had the right to ask for Gadgil's resignation. He certainly had, Gadgil replied. "Ask for it till tomorrow evening and I shall give it...but I am not ready to be anybody's yesman.....I shall not fail to act on the principle of joint responsibility as I understand it". Nehru cooled down and gave Gadgil's draft to Gopalswamy Aiyangar who made the note even sterner. The draft was approved.

Rajaji, Nehru and Kakasaheb remained behind when everybody left. Rajaji tried to mediate. Gadgil made his position clear saying he had supported cabinet decisions which he had not personally approved of. But he could not compromise on questions of national interest. He offered to send in his resignation. Nehru said difference of temperaments was the root of these quarrels. That evening Gadgil received a message that Nehru wanted to see him. Gadgil began

drafting his resignation in his mind and went to the Prime Minister's office certain of his fate. But to his pleasant surprise, Nehru personally came out of his room to greet Gadgil, put his arm round Gadgil's shoulders and said disarmingly, "I apologise for all that happened this morning". Nehru was absolutely free from personal rancour. He acknowledged Gadgil's contribution in guarding India's interests in the river water dispute and even after Gadgil ceased to hold the portfolio of power, he was given the responsibility of industrial production in 1951. Nehru sent him all the papers concerning distribution of waters in Punjab whenever the question came up.

The work on Chatta dam on river Kosi and lining of its banks to prevent its waywardness was also started at the initiative of Kakasaheb. The Koyna dam in Maharashtra, the major hydro-electric power source, also came into being partly because of Gadgil's determined support and initiative. He initiated surveys and reports and found the then Bombay Government lukewarm about it, so much so that the latter sent an important engineering report on the dam to Gadgil as goods parcel by train which took six months to reach its destination. In the planning commission meetings, he forcefully put his views on judicious distribution of water to make Koyna project possible. He later found out why the then Bombay Government was disinterested in Koyna project that time. Many ministers and economists from Maharashtra believed that the power produced from Koyna would go to Bombay and would not be useful to Maharashtra. The Gujarati ministers in the Bombay state planned to produce electricity near Surat and supply it to Bombay so that they could claim Bombay was part of Gujarat. Kakasaheb had foresight to understand this and also had the grit to press for the Koyna project so as to consolidate Bombay's infrastructural links with Maharashtra. Kakasaheb, later, was made the chairman of the Government of India Commission to review all the river valley projects where also he pressed for the second phase of the Koyna project.

Gadgil wanted Narmada project to be taken over first for the benefit of Gujarat. His proposals were not inspired by provincial prejudices but by the desire to do justice to everyone and to give Maharashtra too its due share. He found that many Maharashtrian leaders and cabinet members in Bombay Government neglected the interests of

Maharashtra under the mistaken notion of party discipline. This put Maharashtra at a great disadvantage. Gadgil had no such inhibitions and in his own way, he tried to protect the just interests of Maharashtra. In Harakud, Tungbadra projects, he used his power judiciously. He initiated work on Chambal by resolving the dispute over the site of the dam.

Since Oil was one of Gadgil's portfolios, he had to deal with powerful foreign oil companies. It was at his persuasion that the oil companies refrained from increasing the rates of kerosene even after devaluation of rupee. Gadgil also suggested setting up oil refineries in India to save foreign exchange. The oil companies demurred and inflated the cost of such a venture. But eventually, they had to come round as they found their position in the middle east countries rather shaky. Gadgil, through the shrewed negotiating power of his secretary, C.C. Desai, got these companies to agree on a very vital provision, that of eventual nationalisation. The companies were reluctant to include in the agreement this provision, at least not for fifty years. Gadgil took a firm stand not willing to go beyond twenty years. The negotiations were on the breaking point when Gadgil offered to go upto twenty-five years. The companies' representatives retired for half an hour to consider the issue. Desai asked Gadgil on phone if the limit of thirty-five years would be acceptable. Gadgil conveyed his firm refusal. After some time, the representatives climbed down to thirty years and Gadgil agreed. Subsequently, he obtained the approval of the cabinet and signed the agreement in December 1951.

After Sardar Patel's death, Nehru reorganised the cabinet and entrusted Gadgil with a new ministry of production which included public works, production and supply. Nehru was planning to increase the nationalised industries. The working of the Government mines was in doldrums and he wanted Kakasaheb to bring discipline to the departments. The Sindri Fertilizer Factory had become a headache. Gadgil was familiar with the subject since he was a member of the standing committee of the house in pre-Independence days.

On taking over the charge of the new department, Gadgil found out that the general manager of the Sindri factory had no power to spend

even a rupee without sanction. He had 192 cases pending for approval. Gadgil called the General Manager to Delhi, got all his pending cases disposed off within twenty-four hours and authorised the official sanctioning limit of one lakh rupees. Within eight months, the factory started producing fertilizers. Kakasaheb also found that the government coal mines were losing thirty lakh rupees every year because the government mines were treated on par with private mines in matter of allocation of railway wagons leading to accumulation of coal at mines resulting into losses. Gadgil managed to secure priority in allocation of wagons and within one year the government mines not only wiped out the losses but showed a profit of eleven lakh rupees.

A proposal for setting up a factory producing antibiotics was under consideration of a committee. On taking over the new department, Kakasaheb called a meeting of the committee. The committee comprising leading industrialists, had suggested American collaboration with an eye for profit. Neither Nehru nor Kakasaheb could agree. According to Gadgil, it was his suggestion that the venture be taken under public sector with the help of world health organisation. Nehru readily consented and a decision was made in the same meeting. Within a month, Kakasaheb laid the foundation stone of the Hindustan Antibiotics at Pimpri near Pune. Similarly, with his skill to make quick decisions, he pushed ahead with the plans to set up machine tools factories in the public sector. The scheme was being discussed aimlessly with no results till Gadgil took charge of the new department.

Gadgil's astuteness in business dealings was well tested in 1951 when India purchased huge quantities of rice from Vietnam and needed a large number of gunnybags to transport the rice. When it became known that the Government wanted a large quantity of jute bags, the traders hiked the price from Rs. 262 to Rs. 270 per ton. The traders also made it known that there would be no compromise and even the earlier contract would not be fulfilled. When Gadgil was informed of this, he prepared a note and placed it before the cabinet for urgent discussion. Nehru was furious at the greedy traders. Rajaji, who held home portfolio at that time, asked for Gadgil's suggestions. Kakasaheb said he could secure the bags at moderate price if he was given full powers to deal with the traders and backed by the cabinet in his actions. The cabinet agreed.

Gadgil called the Calcutta traders who controlled the supply of gunny bags. The old businessman sent his son instead of coming himself. Gadgil locked himself with the trader in a room and used all persuasive powers at his command. He talked of Gandhian values, of the moral crime of the traders who took ill advantage of the country's misfortunes. He cajoled, coerced and subtly threatened the trader saying both of them would not leave the room unless a solution which benefitted the country and the traders was found. He had made certain calculations which showed that not Rs. 262 but Rs. 240 per ton should be the actual rate of the jute bags which also afforded a reasonable profit to traders. Gadgil offered the rate of Rs. 240 revealing his knowledge of the business. The young trader ultimately wilted under pressure. Gadgil called his secretary and told him, "We must congratulate this young man for his patriotism. He has agreed to accept the rate of Rs. 242 per ton".

Gadgil's contribution in creating the progressive Indian Electricity Supply Act must also be acknowledged. The bill, a brainchild of Kakasaheb envisaged a ceiling of six per cent on profit of electricity companies and creation of electricity boards in each state. The profits above the ceiling of six per cent were to be used to give relief in rates to consumers. The bill evoked strong opposition from the capitalist lobbies when it came before Parliament. The most hurting provision for them was the ceiling on profits. The bill was referred to a select committee. When some lobbyist called on Sardar Patel complaining against the bill, he directed them to meet Kakasaheb. Gadgil accommodated them trying to satisfy their demands but refused to compromise on ceiling on the profits. After much haggling, the ceiling was maintained but the profit above that limit would be divided three ways. One third would go to augment the capital of the industry, one third to give relief to consumers and the remaining one third, if it was two per cent or below, would go back to the company. If that one third was above two per cent, the part exceeding would go to the government. The bill proved to be a radical one. The principle of limitations on profit was accepted. Some incentive to good management was also provided. Parliament passed the bill smoothly.

Gadgil was a staunch proponent of the Public Sector and drove this point hard while in the cabinet. When the Government of India issued a policy statement on industrialisation in 1948, Kakasaheb tried hard during the discussion to embody principles of socialism in it, though without success. The statement, however, did say that industries vital to national interests should be state-owned. Gadgil was able to establish half a dozen factories in public sector during his tenure. His fierce championship of public sector and socialism was what made Nehru to retain him in the cabinet despite the frequent differences of opinion on other issues which Gadgil never cared to hide.

As stated earlier, Gadgil believed in the principle of joint responsibility of the cabinet. He diligently read the weekly digests of cabinet meetings and took interest in all the subjects discussed by the council of ministers. In his own ministry, Gadgil maintained excellent relations with officers and men. Few days after he was sworn in, he called a meeting of representatives from each class of non-gazetted staff and officers. It was a kind of a round table conference. It was a free government, a people's government now, he told them. All the more important was all of them should work honestly and diligently to create a good government. Such meetings would be held periodically and the minister would seek suggestions and criticism. Everyone should speak with frankness. The employees were overwhelmed. Many of them had not even seen the secretaries of the department. The Viceroy's Council was so distant to them. And now they were in the presence of the minister. Gadgil made these conferences a monthly feature.

It is needless to stress here the integrity and honesty of the members of the first union cabinet. Contractors, bidders, traders, industrialists etc. made a beeline to Delhi to get their things done. Gadgil not only firmly rejected their advances, he transferred and prosecuted the involved officers. When members of parliament came to him to bring pressure seeking to protect erring officers, he just gave them tea, entertained them and bade them goodbye. He was a man of principles and would not budge in matters of corruption no matter which MP brought pressure on him. He antagonised many members and some ministers in the process. But he would not mind.

XIV

A Painful Fight

THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC elections based on universal franchise were held in India in January 1952. According to the new constitution, multi-member constituencies were replaced by single-member constituencies. In 1934, Kakasaheb and Jedhe had contested in this two-member constituency and won. In 1945, Kakasaheb and Hire had retained the dual seat. Now in 1952, Kakasaheb was pitted against his long-time friend, Keshavrao Jedhe on the one hand and S.M. Joshi on the other, Jedhe had joined the newly-formed Peasants and Workers' Party while Joshi contested as the Socialist Party candidate. Jedhe was almost forced by his friends to fight against Kakasaheb. It was an ideal election campaign with three friends fighting amongst themselves. There were ample opportunities for virulent propaganda but all of them followed certain norms. They criticised the policies of the opposing parties but refrained from personal criticism and bitterness.

It was almost a one-way fight for Kakasaheb. The night before the voting was to commence, Jedhe called on Kakasaheb to express his reservations saying he should not have contested. Gadgil said, "It does not matter who is elected. I will rejoice in your victory and I am sure you would do the same in my victory." Kakasaheb won the seat by polling 55 per cent of the votes cast. True to his words, Jedhe was the first to congratulate him by presenting a garland. Joshi had polled very insignificant votes. Kakasaheb had no heart to celebrate his victory. Without allowing the people to hold a victory meeting or procession, he left for Delhi. Jedhe soon became disillusioned with his new friends in the Peasants and Workers' Party. He came to believe

that he was offered as a sacrificial goat by his party at the polls and deliberately made to contest against Kakasaheb against his wishes. Two years later, Jedhe re-entered the Congress with fanfare. Kakasaheb, no doubt, had played a significant role in bringing his prodigal friends back to the mother party. Even during the thick of the electioneering, the relationship between the two friends remained intact. And true to their common belief, they did not indulge in caste-based propaganda though that was the easiest course for both of them to win the election.

By March, the elections were over and speculation was rife about the new cabinet likely to be formed after the first free ballot. Gadgil was doubtful about his inclusion in the new cabinet. Now because he had had several confrontations with Nehru on particular issues, but because he had antagonised by his frankness and fierce adherence to principles many others who were in the close circle around Nehru, he was being told that he would not be included in the next cabinet. Kakasaheb did not lobby. Some advised him to accept the governorship if it was offered to him. Eventually, Nehru called him on April 6, 1952, and asked him to accept the governorship of Bihar. Bihar was an important state and needed an industrial thrust, he said.

Kakasaheb told him that he would not break the promise he had given to his voters that he would serve them for five years. He would neither complain nor be angry if he was not included in the cabinet. Next day some newspapers published a story that as a disciplined soldier of the Congress, Kakasaheb had accepted the Governorship of Bihar. Kakasaheb denied that story. Nehru again approached him with the same proposal. But Kakasaheb refused on the same ground. Thus on May 12, 1952, Kakasaheb Gadgil retired from the Union Cabinet when the new Government was sworn in. Nehru offered him the membership of the planning commission. But that would again involve resigning his seat in the Lok Sabha to which Gadgil did not agree. However, he was taken on the Congress Working Committee and Kakasaheb accepted the post. He was emphatic that it was not true that Nehru dropped him because he belonged to Sardar Patel's group. There was no such group, he asserts. There were other constraints on Nehru which made him drop Kakasaheb. Nehru knew

that Kakasaheb was firmly with him on economic policies. Despite his frequent confrontations and heated exchanges with Nehru, later on the issue of linguistic Maharashtra, Kakasaheb had warm relations with Nehru.

Within a week, Kakasaheb left his bungalow and sent his family back to Pune. He sold his car and went to Pune. It was not necessary for him now to stay in Delhi when Parliament was not in session. His children got accustomed to the new life in Pune fast. Even in Delhi they would go to school on foot. Kakasaheb had borrowed Rs. 10,000 from friends for the election expenses. He returned five thousand rupees to a friend within five years. The other friends, who had loaned four thousand rupees for election, Mr. A.R. Bhat, refused to take the money. Kakasaheb considered it his moral responsibility to use that money for public purposes. He repaid the loan by donating to various social institutions. Similarly, another friend, Chandrashekhar Agashe, had sent four thousand rupees against election expenses, after the polling was over. Gadgil wanted to return it but Agashe would not accept. Gadgil informed this to the Maharashtra Congress President, Bhausaheb Hiray and spent the money for by-elections and other party purposes with his permission. During this period, the conditions at home were not very satisfactory. The salaries he received during his ministership were inadequate to meet the expenses. The little savings he had were spent during the 1952 election. The family had to go through a difficult period.

The point in giving the details of Kakasaheb's election expenses is obvious. It speaks volumes about the selflessness, honesty and frugal asceticism of not only Kakasaheb but of the entire generation nursed by Gandhiji in the fire of the freedom movement. Reminiscences of Kakasaheb's contemporaries like Shankarrao Deo and T.R. alias Mamasahab Deogirikar, reveal a preoccupation with personal financial problems, and their fetish of keeping their public accounts clean and above board. All through his life, Gadgil spent quite some time in repaying loans, either for personal causes or for public purposes. Deogirikar vividly recalls how Kakasaheb worked hard to build the Congress House in Pune and later how he had to run from pillar to post collecting funds to repay the loans. Even after coming to power

and holding the sensitive portfolio like public works, Kakasaheb's integrity remained unquestioned.

His non-inclusion in the cabinet did not have effect on Kakasaheb's interest in the Lok Sabha proceedings. On the contrary he could participate in discussions, without the constraints of ministerial responsibilities. He was allotted a seat on the front bench where the ministerial seats ended. He was often asked by Nehru or the party whip to speak on important issues especially in reply to criticism by prominent opposition members like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, who was the member of the first cabinet in Nehru's national government but who, now, was an effective speaker of the opposition. Nehru sought Gadgil's services in amending the constitution of All India Congress as well as Parliamentary Congress Party.

In June 1952, he was appointed chairman of a committee to review the question of dearness allowances and pension of the Government employees. The Gadgil Committee report, which was out in record time and was accepted by the Government, was acclaimed by the employees as well as Parliament members. The question of linguistic reorganisation of states was gradually snowballing into a movement. Gadgil's opinions on the issue were strong and he was outspoken about them. Many Congress veterans were unhappy about it. Perhaps, as a result, when the Congress Working Committee was reconstituted in February 1953, Gadgil was out of it though he was a permanent invitee. However, this liberation made him free to speak his mind on many subjects without the constraints which a working committee member has. Outside the house he campaigned among the people to mobilise support for the radical Government bills like the one on death duties. In the house, he helped the minister in piloting the bill. He spoke in the public vehemently on the radical contents of the bill which had evoked bitter criticism from the rich classes as well as the middle class.

Later in June 1953, Kakasaheb headed a committee appointed by the Government of India to investigate the resources of the princely states merged into the Indian Union and decide upon the amount of the compensation the princes would receive. He organised the work

of the committee with his characteristic discipline and meticulousness, went on a hurricane tour of the princely states in Saurashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat and Pepsu states and submitted the report in three months as per schedule. Gadgil ably represented India in the Commonwealth Conference held in Lahore in March 1954 and presided over the Sanskrit Sahitya Sammelan at Jalandhar the same year. He took active interest in promotion of Hindi as the national language and was president of annual conference of Rashtrabhasha Pracharini Sabha in Wardha. He also took active interest in the functioning of the Maharashtra Mandal in Delhi and set it on proper footing. Because of his love for Hindi, he was invited to speak at many places in North India. When the University Grants Commission Bill was referred by Parliament to a joint select committee, Gadgil was made its chairman in 1954. Kakasaheb had acquired the reputation that he had the knack of organising the work of a committee or a commission so smoothly that a commission headed by him was bound to submit its report on time and get it approved in parliament smoothly. But when he was asked to head a commission to decide and list the backward classes in the country and define their needs, he refused on principle. He explained that appointment of such a commission would have an adverse reaction. It would only encourage many advanced castes to label themselves as backward ones and aggravate the caste schism, he felt.

In Congress sessions, Kakasaheb forcefully put forward his socialist views contributing in his own way to lend a socialist orientation to the ruling party. He had been speaking of a socialist society and in Ajmer session of the AICC in September 1954, spoke at length on the concept. He had suggested an amendment to the economic resolution which committed India to the goal of socialism. Nehru upheld this suggestion but suggested that it should not be put to vote since most likely it would be defeated. It could be brought again next time but the defeat would rob it of its moral sanctity. The amendment was withdrawn. But soon in December 1954, the Lok Sabha passed a resolution setting clearly the goal of creation of socialist pattern in India.

The January 1955 Avadi Congress passed the historic resolution where the conception of socialist pattern of society was accepted. The resolution said: In order to realise the object of the changes as laid down in Article 1 of the Congress constitution, and to further the object stated in the preamble and directive principles of the state policy of the Constitution of India, planning should take place with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth.

While seconding the resolution, Kakasaheb suggested that the word socialistic should be replaced by socialist as that was the word accepted in Parliament resolution. He did not move an amendment to that effect lest it might provoke the anti-socialist elements within the party. The resolution was passed. Kakasaheb remained committed to this good till the end of his life.

The linguistic reorganisation of the states is a painful chapter in the history of India. Nehru had tried hard to postpone this issue but rising linguistic aspirations would not allow deferring a decision for long. Kakasaheb was in favour of early reorganisation. People of Maharashtra had to fight hard and long to win the Marathi-speaking state of Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital. Many books have been written on this struggle. But few have acknowledged Kakasaheb's contribution in his own way towards achieving the goal of Maharashtra.

The question of linguistic reorganisation of states had been discussed in India for a long time. The Government of India appointed S.K. Dhar Commission in February 1948 to review the issue and make recommendations. Its report released in December the same year clearly advised against linguistic reorganisation which, according to the commission, was against the interests of the country. But the pressure was building up in the states. The Dhar Commission report was soundly criticised all over and the Jaipur Congress of 1948 appointed a high-level three man committee of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramaiya to review the issue. The Committee's report was milder in content than that of the Dhar

Commission. But it recommended that time was not ripe for such division of states. This report had recommended to keep the city of Bombay out of Maharashtra.

When the report was discussed in the cabinet, Sardar Patel suggested that a decision should be taken to keep Bombay separate. The rest of the issues could be decided later on. Gadgil angrily criticised this contention and warned that such a move would have grave repercussions. Patel reminded that Bombay's prosperity was built by the Gujaratis and remarked that its status should not be determined by the majority. Gadgil bitterly retorted that in that case there was no need to drive away the British from India as they had brought so much development to the sub-continent. The cabinet watched with amused interest when an hour-long heated exchange followed between Gadgil and his mentor. "This patricidal business is interesting", Gopalswamy Aiyangar remarked. Gadgil was not a blind follower of his idols. He clashed with Sardar and later with Nehru on the question of Bombay. During the height of the Maharashtra movement, Gadgil fell out with most Congress leaders in Maharashtra and carried on a lone battle from within the party and parliament going through an agonising test of his patience, loyalty and his faith in his own methods.

The linguistic reorganisation demand gained momentum when a Gandhian veteran, Pottu Sriramulu, launched a fast unto death for creation of Telugu-speaking Andhra State. Sriramulu died after fasting for 58 days and his death sparked off ugly language riots in the then Madras State. Finally, Nehru had to announce the creation of Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh in the Lok Sabha on December 19, 1952. The corollary of the creation of Andhra was appointment of Fazal Ali Commission on December 22, 1953, to go into the entire gamut of linguistic reorganisation of the states.

The vexatious problem was that of city of Bombay. While some Gujarati traders wanted the metropolis to be part of Gujarati-speaking state, other trading and industrial lobbies tried to keep Bombay a separate entity. People in Maharashtra naturally thought that Bombay was part and parcel of linguistic Maharashtra. Kakasaheb Gadgil was

also of this opinion. However, during his frequent discussions with Patel before the latter's death, Kakasaheb had agreed that the idea of trying a composite state of Marathi and Gujarati speaking people, of which Bombay will be a part, should be tried. The bilingual state would not only avoid recriminations but would also present an ideal of linguistic harmony to the other states, it was thought. The idea caught the imagination of the Congress leadership. Thus when the Fazal Ali Commission submitted its report in October 1955, it recommended a composite state of Gujarat and Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital. But it had carved out Marathi-speaking Vidarbha as a separate state. Neither the Maharashtrians nor the Gujaratis were happy with the proposal. Opinion in Vidarbha was divided. Barring certain leaders, majority of the people in Vidarbha were in favour of merging with Maharashtra. People of Maharashtra were particularly incensed because of exclusion of Vidarbha.

While people in Bombay and Maharashtra went to the streets to protest, Kakasaheb publicly expressed his opinion against the commission's recommendations. All the linguistic states had received justice, only Gujarat and Maharashtra were denied. He spoke to various leaders warning them of the consequences of this action. In an all-party public meeting in Bombay on October 16, 1955, the day when his son Vitthal got married, Gadgil warned that the people were angry at the injustice and that they would now bring out the 'weapons' used against the British. Later he told Govind Ballabh Pant, the Union Home Minister, that denying linguistic Maharashtra would provoke people to violent agitation in which the Congress party would be swept away. The Congress leaders in Maharashtra were confused on future course of action. Gadgil, Hiray and Deo devised a scheme of a composite bilingual with Bombay and Vidarbha included and both linguistic groups, Marathi and Gujarati having right to break away from the bilingual. To agree to try this idea would mean Bombay city would remain intact with Maharashtra. In the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress meeting, Gadgil moved a resolution to this effect which was passed. Mr. Y.B. Chavan seconded the resolution. However, the Gujarat Congress and the Bombay City Congress rejected this proposal. As a result, the Congress high command proposed a separate city state

for Bombay. According to Gadgil, Maharashtra's representatives in the Congress Working Committee, Hiray, Haribhau Pataskar and Deogirikar, had no guts to oppose the pressure from the leaders and agreed to keep Bombay away.

The reaction in Bombay and Maharashtra was staggering. People were up in arms. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti declared a programme of action. Since the Maharashtra representatives in the working committee had accepted the proposal, Congress high command was complacent thinking that the whole of Maharashtra would support the decision. People and the Congress workers felt let down by the ruling party. Resentment built up against the Congress. While Hiray and Chavan eyed the chief ministership of the bilingual state in the making, Kakasaheb Gadgil visualised that the fight for Maharashtra with Bombay will be prolonged and bitter. Pressure was being put on the Congress leaders to quit the party and enter the fight. Gadgil debated with himself the question of leaving the party and decided against it. He felt he could serve the cause better by remaining within the party and by fighting in Parliament.

According to T.R. Deogirikar, the then president of the Maharashtra Congress, he had opposed in the working committee separation of Bombay from Maharashtra. He fought continuously against it. But his voice proved weak before the high command. Nehru told him that the leadership was in a quandary. If the leadership accepted the demand, it would fling open all the floodgates of opposition.

A marathon meeting of the Maharashtra Congress working committee on November 16, 1955, reflected the desperation of the partymen. The ten-hour meeting discussed various alternatives and strategies. Gadgil proposed a resolution which was carried. The resolution, in effect, expressed the committee's pain and sorrow at the fact that Bombay was not given to Maharashtra and urged upon the CWC to reconsider its decision on Bombay. It sought to change the heart and opinions of the leadership to get justice for Maharashtra. Gadgil refused to believe that the Working Committee's decision was final and publicly said so.

The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti had given a hartal call for November 21. It was an unprecedented bandh in Bombay. Under orders from Morarji Desai, the then chief minister of Bombay State, the police opened fire. Eight people died on that day.

During Parliament session in Delhi, Gadgil made vigorous propaganda for Maharashtra state among Lok Sabha members. He met the members in groups and argued Maharashtra's case. He sent numerous missives to Nehru and Pant making suggestions on Bombay's inclusion in Maharashtra. Hiray, Deo and other Maharashtra leaders proposed that the state of Maharashtra would provide certain protections to Bombay. When they made this suggestion to Nehru, his refrain was that the three-state proposal (Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bombay) should be accepted first. Kakasaheb was dead against formalising protective clauses in linguistic Maharashtra. That would mean the people of Maharashtra were unreliable, he argued. Meanwhile, the rift in the Congress leadership in Maharashtra became a public knowledge.

When Congress Parliamentary Party met in December before the winter session, Gadgil pressed for a discussion on the report of the reorganisation committee. Gadgil spoke with brutal frankness. He said Congress was a great party. But it should not consider itself greater than the country. A furious Nehru retorted, "Who are we if not the country". The Commission's report came before the Lok Sabha for consideration on December 14, 1955, and the debate continued till December 23. Gadgil put all his oratorical and legal skill in arguing Maharashtra's case to seek justice in the highest law-making body of the land and warned that people's passions had aroused. If the problem was not solved according to the people's wishes in the proper forum, it will go on the streets. The speech created a sensation. He strongly advocated the bilingual state with a right to break a way to either of the linguistic group.

As the question bogged down in the talks and indecision of leadership, people of Bombay staged huge demonstrations. In this highly surcharged atmosphere, Gadgil was invited to speak in a public rally at Bombay's Shivaji Park on December 16. The incident that followed needs recapitulation in some details because it shows the courage of conviction of this little man, his fierce loyalty to the ideology of his party, which at that time had appeared to have let him and his people down, his enormous self-confidence, purity of his thought, his presence of mind and sense of humour.

On that day, the whole Bombay had downed its shutters. Textile mills closed one by one as the workers demanding inclusion of Bombay in Maharashtra went on strike. The reason for the tension was that on that day Nehru had announced the decision on the three-state formula with Bombay as a centrally governed city-state. Morarji Desai had begun preventive arrests even before the announcement was made. The air was thick with anger and rumours of violence and Gadgil was advised not to go to the rally. The rally was for Samyukta Maharashtra and Congressmen were obviously the targets of the mass fury on that day. Kakasaheb, true to his character, refused to be cowed down and went to the rally. There were slogans like 'Congress Murdabad', 'Nehru Murdabad' and 'White cap Murdabad'. The anti-Congress syndrome, which the middle-class Maharashtra had never quite buried, had surfaced again with virulence, with some reason this time.

As Kakasaheb, donning his white cap, rose to speak, there were shouts from the mammoth rally, 'Remove the cap', 'Resign from the Congress'. The Congress white cap was singular anathema to the masses in that hour. Some of the groups were not far away from violence. Some leaders on the stage advised Kakasaheb to remove his cap for the sake of safety. As the shouts reached a crescendo, Kakasaheb removed his cap and held it high above his head. Suddenly, the mobs were humoured and Kakasaheb was greeted with a thunderous clapping. The next moment, Kakasaheb replaced the cap on the head provoking even more violent protests and shouts. The whole gathering became tense. As the chorus of shouts became uncontrollable, Gadgil again removed the white cap and held it high.

Then he shouted in the mike, "This white cap, I had not removed during the height of British imperialist Raj. I will not do it in Morarji Desai's Raj". The rhetoric worked. The one-lakh strong meeting was stunned with Gadgil's audacity. But the gathering appreciated his conviction and applauded him with a thunderous ovation.

For about a week from January 17, 1956, Bombay city was enveloped in riots. The government property was the target of the riotous mobs. Morarji Desai again ordered the police to shoot. Nearly 120 people died. On January 19, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress working committee met in Pune and passed a resolution asking Congress ministers, office-bearers, legislators and parliamentarians to resign on the issue of Bombay. The CWC took strong exception to this move and refused to accept the resignation letters. Maharashtra's image was badly mauled in the eyes of the Congress.

Thus when Kakasaheb went to attend the Amritsar Congress in February, nobody cared to receive him. He was a former Union cabinet minister, member of the AICC and a former member of the working committee. He had to carry his bag on head. In the subjects committee, he again forcefully put forth Maharashtra's view explaining how its people were victims of scheming and how they were maligned with misguided propaganda. His sober speech has had some effect on the gathering. It must be noted, within the Congress organisation, Gadgil's voice was the strongest from Maharashtra. Other leaders from the state had no courage to incur the wrath of the leadership. He demanded an inquiry into the alleged riots in Bombay.

Kakasaheb had not lost heart. He continued his campaign, frequently speaking in the Lok Sabha to highlight how the trading interests in Bombay had done injustice to the people of Maharashtra. He did not stop writing letters to Congress High Command suggesting various ways to find a solution. He seized every opportunity to raise the issue in Parliament. He had faith in Nehru's sense of justice. Nehru had strong prejudices. But once you could remove these prejudices, Nehru always stood against injustice. Nehru also had faith in democratic opinion, Gadgil knew. At one time, Gadgil was almost alone in the top Congress hierarchy to oppose the three-state formula. He waged

the battle single-handed. Satyanarayan Sinha arranged his meeting with Nehru in the Parliament lobby on April 24. Gadgil was adamant on inclusion of Bombay in Maharashtra and on an inquiry into the Bombay massacre to vindicate the honour of Maharashtra. Nehru said, "We are comrades. Why are you so bitter?" Gadgil retorted, "Remember that you are the ideal leader for our generation. Creation of Maharashtra is a matter of principle for us. We want Maharashtra to bring in socialism". Nehru put his arm around Kakasaheb's shoulders and said, "Find a way out". Kakasaheb said, "Listen to my speech in Lok Sabha today and then consider".

Nehru came to Lok Sabha to listen to Gadgil. Kakasaheb said that to withdraw the demand for inquiry was to allow the injustice to perpetuate. But he would not press for an inquiry if justice was done to Maharashtra's people. There was no question that Bombay should be vested in Maharashtra. It should be merged in Maharashtra within next five years and Pandit Nehru should decide whether it should merge in two years or three years. The speech soberly explained Maharashtra's position in details. It had had its effect. Gadgil could sense the tide turning.

Nehru was confused. Moreover, he was constantly fed with misinformation about the issue. Nehru realised the intensity of public opinion in Bombay during the AICC session held in June 1956 in the metropolis. His public meeting at Chowpatty under heavy police protection was the smallest one in his career. Subsequently, the Maharashtra Congress again decided that its office-bearers should resign. Gadgil was under tremendous pressure to leave the party. But his conviction was unfailing. Meanwhile, a signature campaign was launched in Parliament. The statement signed suggested a bigger bilingual instead of three-state formula. C.D. Deshmukh had resigned on the question of Bombay and this too had a tremendous effect on the thinking of Congress leadership.

Finally, The CWC approved the bigger bilingual formula with Bombay as the state's capital in the first week of August. It provoked bloody riots in Gujarat their demand being a separate linguistic state. Parliament passed the relevant bill in the third week of August. When

the Maharashtra Congress passed a resolution welcoming the bilingual, Gadgil supported the move and reminded the meeting of the concept of Sardar Patel which envisaged a bilingual state of Gujarat and Maharashtra to set an example in national integration. The next step was creation of Maharashtra, he said. The bilingual state of Bombay with Y.B. Chavan as its chief minister, was inaugurated on November 1, 1956.

Kakasaheb had been predicting disaster for the Congress in Maharashtra if justice was not done to its people. The next general elections of 1957 proved him correct. Congress could wrest only 35 out of the 135 assembly seats in Western Maharashtra. It lost 21 of the 23 Lok Sabha seats. Gadgil was defeated in his home constituency by N.G. Goray by a margin of forty-one thousand votes. The election results were an eye-opener to the Congress leadership.

During the electioneering, Gadgil did not lose sight of his role as a disciplined Congressman. He explained to the people why the bilingual had become necessary and how it would pave the way for a Marathi-speaking Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital. His main thrust of the argument was that the decision to create the bilingual was that of Parliament. It was upto Parliament to change it. And so all agitations should aim at changing the opinion of the Parliament. He was applauded, booed and jeered at many places. His meetings were stoned frequently and at least on one occasion he was seriously hurt. But he did not budge from his position. Kakasaheb's wife and daughter, who had been actively participating in the Maharashtra movement, refused to campaign for the Congress and for Kakasaheb. His son, Vitthal, had whole-heartedly supported the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and campaigned for Samiti's candidate against his own father. Kakasaheb was not angry. His only advice to his son was, "When your son will do the same to you, do not get angry. Be a true democrat".

The results of the elections made it unequivocally clear where the public opinion lay. Maharashtra was not far off. In two years, Y.B. Chavan had to convince the leadership how difficult it was to manage the bilingual state. Finally, the Marathi speaking state of Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital, was inaugurated on May 1, 1960.

It will be ridiculous to claim that Gadgil's lone crusade was responsible for creation of Maharashtra. But his contribution is not insignificant. Prof. Y.D. Phadke, a political scientist and historian of socialist leanings, has also acknowledged Kakasaheb's share in this episode in Maharashtra. What is more remarkable is that during this fight, he never compromised his principles nor lost sight of the overall Indian perspective.

Common Man's Governor

FAR FROM DISHEARTENING him, his defeat in the 1957 Lok Sabha election from his home constituency of Pune, spurred Kakasaheb Gadgil to greater activities. The defeat was, of course, a matter of personal grief. Grief for the fact that the people of Pune, whom he had served so well and so loyally during two terms of Central Legislative Assembly which then was converted into Parliament and one full term of Lok Sabha, would not believe in him. But publicly, his defeat, in fact, was a vindication of his stand and in a sense the victory for Maharashtra. It was the defeat of the Congress Party which had taken an unrealistic and irrational stand on the issue of Bombay unmindful of the wishes of the majority in that city. This defeat would certainly open the eyes of the leadership to the reality.

Kakasaheb's analysis of social and political psyche of the Maharashtrian masses was remarkable which gave him a deep understanding of the working of people's mind. In the din of the controversies that perennially dogged him and the lack of seriousness with which the flippant intellectuals of Maharashtra treated him—partly because of his action of reducing the influence of Brahmins on politics—many of Kakasaheb's warnings, forebodings, pronouncements and prophetic observations have gone unheeded. Not only in regard to Maharashtra, but during the course of freedom struggle and later in the epic struggle of nation-building, Gadgil's precient observations have proved uncannily correct. Immediately after the Congress reversals in Maharashtra in 1957 elections, he reminded the leadership of the assessment he had made of the situation. He wrote to Nehru, Pant and other leaders analysing the causes of the Congress reversal to show that defeat was inevitable in the face of the stand taken by the party on the sensitive issue of Bombay and Maharashtra.

Gadgil was firm in his opinion that the capitalist and trading interests were against the formation of linguistic Maharashtra. In public he spoke bluntly about it. With Jedhe's partnership, he had strived to convert the caste conflict in Maharashtra into a class struggle. He spoke of Maharashtra as India's first experiment in socialism. He did not stop lobbying in Delhi with parliamentarians for creation of that state though he was defeated in the election.

Before the elections, Kakasaheb was given the leadership of Irrigation and Power Projects committee of the Planning Commission in 1956. He worked for the committee without drawing any salary even when the electioneering was on. After his defeat when his Lok Sabha term came to an end, Pant suggested him to stay in Delhi to concentrate on the committee work and accept the salary. For a while, he worked without honorarium but later, partly because it would embarrass the other members of the committee and partly because he had no other means of livelihood, he accepted a salary of Rs. 1,200 a month. He went about his work with his characteristic discipline, charted a programme of activities and studied the subject extensively. The committee was mainly responsible for studying the Nagarjun Sagar, Chambal and Koyna projects and making recommendations. It also had to handle several minor projects and tubewell schemes. As a minister for Public Works, Gadgil was familiar with some of the issues. He had committed himself to push ahead with the Koyna scheme. The committee presented him an opportunity to do so despite opposition from some misguided leaders in Maharashtra. He did this with elan, educating the people on the benefits of a multi-purpose river valley project like Koyna, convincing the leaders. With the equal zeal, he worked for the Nagarjun Sagar, Chambal and Bhadravati river projects.

In June 1957, Kakasaheb was offered the vice-chairmanship of the State Bank of India at the instance of Nehru and Pant. When Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari asked him about this, Kakasaheb said his views on financial affairs were well known and he would not compromise on them. He accepted on being told that Nehru wanted an outspoken man for the post.

Gadgil initiated economy measures in the bank affairs by setting an example. He refused to accept the salary from the bank and also did not avail of a flat in Bombay which was due to him as vice-chairman. He heartily supported the move to cut down the allowances by half. When in Calcutta for the board meetings, he stayed modestly at Maharashtra Mandal. He never used the Bank's stationery for his personal work. Even when he was union minister and later the Governor of Punjab and Vice-Chancellor of Pune University, he scrupulously avoided using office stationery for personal purposes and paid from his pocket for personal correspondence. His puritan austerity in this respect sometimes became a matter of ridicule for the cynics and embarrassment for his colleagues. But it immediately evoked deep respect among the people who worked with him.

As Vice-Chairman, Gadgil had to take active interest in the affairs of the Bank. He found that a few monopolists and capitalists had been deriving undue concessions from the bank drawing advance upto hundred per cent of the goods hypothecated while the common limit for such advance was 80 per cent. Gadgil stopped this practice and stopped pampering the capitalists. His leadership helped the bank in establishing its reputation and distributing its benefits to as many people as possible. His radical proposals like controls on Sugar trade evoked criticism from trading interests as well as respect from people who believed in nationalisation of the Bank. In a meeting of the Bank's share holders, a member objected to Gadgil occupying the vice-chairman's post because of his radical views. The Government should not keep Gadgil in this post even for a moment, he said. Gadgil advised the member to make his demand to the Government of India. He would not occupy the chair a day more if the Government thought it fit. In any case, his personal interest was not involved in the chair as he did not draw salary for the post. The man was dumb-founded to hear this. Gadgil went ahead with his programme and brought the Banks in the princely states of Jaipur, Hyderabad, Patiala in the folds of the State Bank.

During this period, Home Minister Pant had been persuading him to accept the Governorship of Punjab. His reservations in 1952 in accepting the governorship were no longer valid now since he was

not an elected representative. Pant told him that now it was his duty to accept the task. Gadgil relented and accepted the offer in August 1958. During his four year-tenure of the Governor of Punjab, he impressed his stamp on the people and the Government by his sense of justice and fair-play, broad secular views, easy accessibility to all and his Gandhian austerity. The Raj Bhavan at Chandigarh became a common man's durbar.

As a Governor, he paid from his salary for his household expenses in the Raj Bhavan. Even his relations and friends and guests received hospitality at his own expense. The entertainment allowance was strictly spent on official guests and functions. No person was barred from meeting him. He toured extensively in the state establishing rapport with the people and learnt the Punjabi language. Within a year, he addressed the Punjab legislature in that language. During his tenure, he translated Japajisaheb of Nanakdev in Marathi and also wrote in Marathi a 350 page history of sikhs. He had excellent rapport with Pratap Singh Kairon the Chief Minister and on his advice attended cabinet meetings on critical occasions such as guiding flood relief operations or dealing with illegal arms hidden in gurudwaras.

As Governor of Punjab, Gadgil had to handle with care a very delicate issue. The Akali Dal victory in Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee spurred the Akalis to launch a movement for Punjabi Suba. The Suba agitation was firmly handled by the Government in the first week of December avoiding a confrontation between the Sikhs and Hindi-protagonist Hindus. Sant Fateh Singh launched a fast for Punjabi Suba. Pratap Singh Kairon, the Punjab Chief Minister, had the firm support of Gadgil alone in dealing with Fateh Singh. Kairon could not rely even on his cabinet colleagues. Later in August 1961, Master Tara Singh launched a fast unto death for the same demand. The Kairon Government had made extensive arrangements to keep peace in Punjab surcharged with emotions. At the same time Akali leaders promoted the idea that no police or Government official could enter the Gurudwaras. With the result the Gurudwaras were being considered the state within the state. The police reports said that antisocial elements took shelter and stored arms in Gurudwaras. While Master Tara Singh's failing health caused concern, the rumours about happenings in

Gurudwaras led to high tension. Gadgil called a meeting of high police officials and the Chief Minister at Raj Bhavan. In the discussion, it was agreed that the tension would not ease unless Gurudwaras were cleared of illegal arms. On September 15, 1961, the Punjab police raided half a dozen Gurudwaras—Amritsar's Golden Temple was not touched—and seized illegal arms, literature and chemicals.

At night, Delhi conveyed to the Chief Minister its anger at this move. Kairon rushed to Raj Bhavan to inform Gadgil of Delhi's anger. At midnight, Kakasaheb drafted a long note analysing the situation in Punjab and explaining why it was imperative to raid the Gurudwaras. He also reminded Delhi that law and order was a state subject. The note was sent to Delhi through a special messenger. Next day, Delhi relented and agreed that it was within the right of the state to take the action. The State Government warned the people hiding in other Gurudwaras, including Durbar Sahib of Amritsar to surrender arms. Within a couple of days, the Gurudwara managements laid their arms at the nearest police chowkies. Master Tara Singh ended his fast on October 2, 1961. The agitation ended without any damage because of the firm handling by the Government. Kakasaheb Gadgil stood solidly behind Pratap Singh Kairon giving him courage and advice. Gadgil's view was that a sectarian issue like that of Punjabi Suba can whip up people's emotions and assume enormous proportions unless handled with tact and firmness by the Government. After he retired as Governor, he frequently commented on Punjab situation complaining that the subsequent Governments there lacked in firmness.

As Governor, Kakasaheb used his rights effectively and judiciously. A minister involved in tampering of the process of justice in court was asked by Kakasaheb to resign. The minister refused. Gadgil told the Chief Minister that he was not bound to go by the latter's advice. The concerned minister sought help in Delhi. But Gadgil refused to heed any advice and sacked the minister. This shock therapy had had a salient impact on the administration and bureaucracy.

Gadgil believed that the governorship was not a mere decorative office nor was the governor a puppet in anybody's hand. If the Governor was wise enough and if he had moral authority, he could

get many good things done, he felt. But Kakasaheb was also against the governor dominating over the cabinet. That would be travesty of democracy. He spoke on policy matters very cautiously and gave his advice to the council of ministers only when sought for.

Kakasaheb's courage of conviction could best be illustrated by two incidents. The Punjab farmers had launched an agitation against water cess. Gadgil felt it was an unjust and irrational demand since the farmers had achieved prosperity using the canal water and power from projects built with centre's assistance. Few ministers and politicians dared to take this stand for the fear of incurring the wrath of the militant farmers. While addressing a students' rally in Amritsar, Gadgil bluntly condemned the irrational attitude of the farmers.

During the farmers agitation, four people died when the police had to open fire on a violent mob in a village near Ludhiana. The incident created a furore in the newspapers. Gadgil rushed to the place against the advice of the police and without informing anybody. The police officer who followed requested him not to enter the village. Gadgil brushed aside his advice and went ahead along with a lone bodyguard on foot. He saw an old Sikh teaching about a hundred children. Kakasaheb approached them and asked the children a few questions in his smattering Punjabi which amused the boys and they burst out laughing. He presented Rs. 25 to the teacher to distribute sweets to children. Soon, the news spread in the village. The chaudhari of the village rushed to the scene and apologised for the incidents. Kakasaheb was taken to the local Gurudwara, presented with a traditional *Saropa* and felicitated. He told the people not to take law in their hands. Approach the government with grievances and these would be solved, he said. The story of Kakasaheb's visit to the village was splashed in newspapers all over Punjab which had a sobering effect on the agitation.

A week after the Akali agitation was withdrawn, Kakasaheb was in Amritsar and he decided to visit the Durbar Sahib. The cabinet advised him not to go. The police also objected. Gadgil was firm. He said he would visit the holy place in his personal capacity with his wife. He would not need any protection or bandobust. Sikhs were his friends.

When Gadgil went with his wife, thousands turned up at the Gurudwara to receive him. Fears of the police and cabinet proved baseless. Not only there was no incident, Kakasaheb and his wife were received with love and warmth and felicitated. Little deeds of humanity, like visiting the besieged village near Ludhiana, helping Master Tara Singh to have his son with him during his incarceration, his free accessibility, his warmth of heart and almost Gandhian austerity had won him love and affection of the Sikh masses.

XVI

A Journey to Remember

A MAN OF the masses and a born politician, Gadgil felt stifled in the formal and aristocratic atmosphere of the Raj Bhavan. To him the governorship was a political externment. He had accepted the office to do a specific job. Once the job was done, he sought retirement. His utility in Punjab was over. He did not even want to complete the five-year term. He sent in his resignation to the President and told a felicitation meeting in June 1962 that he had decided to quit the office before October 2. If he was not relieved before that, he would walk out of the Raj Bhavan just like that. He did not want to contest in the next elections. He wanted to be with the people and so be relieved, he wrote to the President of India. Finally, he was relieved on October 1, 1962. "The feeling of relief was just like when I was released from jail", Kakasaheb wrote. The people of Punjab gave him a warm send off.

From Chandigarh to Pune was a journey from palatial Raj Bhavan to the lower middle-class Shaniwar Peth house, from official aristocratic riches to private penury though it was also a pilgrimage from gubernatorial isolation to the daily humdrum of people's life. Gadgil relished this journey and proudly stood in the bus queues in Pune refusing offers of lift from well-to-do friends. The man who was the member of Central Assembly and later Lok Sabha for three terms, who worked on several important committees, who was a union minister in Independent India's first cabinet, the Governor of Punjab and vice-chairman of the State Bank of India, found himself at the end of his political career almost where he was in the beginning. And Kakasaheb had no regrets on this count. He was proud of his low middle-class status. Apart from the small house in a narrow Shaniwar

Peth lane, which he had bought and rebuilt at the beginning of his law practice, he had no other house, no bungalow in the posh localities of Pune, neither in Bombay nor in Delhi. The car he had bought from a loan during his ministership was already sold to pay for his son's education. His detractors in Maharashtra often accused him of political upmanship and braggadocio. He never minded these accusations. But he would not tolerate even a hint that he had made money in some way or the other in politics. His wealth was his sacrifice, honesty and integrity. "I have amassed people's love. That is my wealth", he would often say. Once Vitthalrao Gadgil used this phrase in a public speech and a friend chided Kakasaheb that his son had stolen his words. "That is not a theft", Kakasaheb remarked, "It is the only heritage left to him by his father".

On return to Pune in 1962, Kakasaheb Gadgil did not rest on his laurels. He kept up a busy schedule of writing, reading, public meetings and of literary activities. In the same year, he was elected President of the prestigious Marathi Sahitya Sammelan held at Satara. His correspondence was voluminous and varied. Though now retired from daily politicking, Gadgil kept himself abreast of the events and wrote frequently to the leadership giving his usually frank and blunt opinions. At the age of 68, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pune in 1964, a task he undertook with zeal. As was his wont, he took this new responsibility with characteristic seriousness, disciplining the university affairs, monitoring the funds, guarding the autonomy of the university against political interference and zealously donning the uniform of the National Cadet Corps Colonel Commandant to encourage students' interest in military affairs. The country was still under the shadow of disastrous Indo-China conflict of 1962 and was about to face confrontation with Pakistan. Gadgil introduced military science as a subject of special study in the university curricula in 1965.

Kakasaheb had decided to carry the responsibility of the University just for two years. But his tenure came to an abrupt end when he died in the early hours of January 12, 1966, after a brief illness. He suffered from diabetes for nearly thirty years and had kept the disease under control with a rigorous discipline. Almost till the day he went into diabetic coma on January 8, 1966, he kept up a rigorous schedule of

attending the university office, going to many public functions as the Vice-Chancellor, meeting people, reading and writing. He went to Delhi in the last week of November 1966 and had a meeting with Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. In Delhi, he was informed that his wife, Rangutai, had taken ill. Next day, he rushed back to Pune. He received a big jolt when Rangutai died on December 10. She had loyally supported him through his later life and had looked after family and young children with love and care. Kakasaheb felt lonely.

He could not recover from this blow. Though he kept himself busy in his daily activities and writing, his health slowly declined. Following his meeting with Lal Bahadur Shastri, there were reports that Kakasaheb might be entrusted with some major political responsibility. But now, Kakasaheb was truly in a retired mood. He worked as usual till late on January 7, 1966. Next day, he fell ill and then went into diabetic coma. He did not recover and died peacefully in the early hours of January 12. Pune went into mourning. His was the biggest funeral procession in the history of Pune. Men, women and children from all sections of Pune crowded both the banks of river Mutha where he was cremated.

Gadgil was a fearless thinker of independent mind, mourned Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India. Mrs. Indira Gandhi remembered him as a fearless fighter and orator. The fighters of the Indian freedom movement were quitting this world one by one leaving a vacuum behind, she said. Messages poured from all over the country. The crisis in Delhi caused by Shastri's death prevented many from attending Kakasaheb's funeral. Punjab's Governor Prabodh Chandra summed up Kakasaheb's contribution aptly. Kakasaheb never compromised his principles and strived hard to lend moral character and integrity to the public life of this country, he said. For Mr. Y.B. Chavan, Gadgil's death signified an end of an era in Maharashtra.

Kakasaheb truly represented that vintage generation of selfless leaders who devoted their life to building the foundations of this country. He set certain standards for himself in public life and followed them scrupulously. He was a man of deep moral convictions and unflinching courage. He would indeed be remembered for his many

achievements as a Congress leader, as a freedom fighter and as a Union Minister. But above all, he will be remembered for his indomitable optimism, his unshakable faith in democracy, his honesty and integrity, purity of his heart and his abiding love for the masses.

Life at a Glance

- Birth* : January 10, 1896; Malhargarh, Madhya Pradesh
- Death* : January 12, 1966; Pune
- Education* : Primary and Secondary at Malhargarh and Pune college at Baroda and Fergusson College, Pune; Law College, Bombay. B.A. in 1918 and LLB in 1920
- Political Career* : Secretary, Pune District Congress Committee — 1921-1925; Secretary, Maharashtra Congress Committee —1922-1924; President, Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee —1937-1945; Member, AICC —1925-1958; Member, Congress Working Committee — 1952-1954; Member of Parliament — 1934-1957; Whip and Secretary, Congress Parliamentary Party - 1935-1947; Member, Pay Commission — 1946; Chairman of Commission on Dearness Allowances — 1952; Chairman, Committee on Financial Problems of Princely States — 1953; Member delegate to Commonwealth Conference —Lahore in 1954 and Delhi in 1965; Union Cabinet Minister — 1947-1952; Vice-Chairman, State Bank of India —1957-1958; Governor of Punjab —1958-1962.

Imprisoned

: Eight times. Total term five years and six months.

Other Activities

: Vice-Chancellor, University of Pune —1964-1966; President, Delhi Regional Hindi Sahitya Sammelan — 1953; President, Maharashtra Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti Conference, 1953; President, Marathi Sahitya Sammelan —1962; Vice-President Indian Council of World Affairs and Indian Institute of Public Administration.

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Daiva Dete Pan Karma Nete (Marathi): Shankarrao Deo
Krishnakath; (Marathi): Y.B. Chavan

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